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Experiential by Design

Integrating Experiential Learning Strategies Into Nonprofit Management Education

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Abstract

This paper provides a literature review of experiential learning in the context of nonprofit management education and its contribution to local and global community engagement. It presents three models for the strategic integration of experiential learning in teaching and learning, theory and practice, along local and global community immersions. Drawing upon the field's literature and case studies, this paper offers pedagogical models and administrative recommendations to advance the integration of experiential education and community engagement for educating nonprofit managers and leaders in the 21st century more effectively.

Keywords: *experiential learning; project-based; social impact; nonprofit education*

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Learning through real-world experiences is a valued pedagogy in higher education and an essential method for educating effective nonprofit managers in the 21st century. The practical fields of management education and nonprofit management education (NME) aim to develop appropriate skills, competencies, and mind-sets relevant to administrative, organizational, and leadership careers. These objectives cannot be sufficiently accomplished through in-class lectures and activities only. They require more hands-on and community-centered approaches that increase student exposure to real-world situations while benefiting the capacity development needs of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) and the sector. When the NME field started offering nonprofit-specific graduate programs in the United States with the University of San Francisco's Master in Nonprofit Organization Management (MPA/NOM in 1983), later renamed Master of Nonprofit Administration (MNA in 1985), the need for experiential learning was not as urgent as today. Most of the students in the early development of the field were professionals with several years of experience in the sector. They sought theories to understand their own practices, along with university recognition for their leadership advancements (O'Neill & Fletcher, 1998; O'Neill & Young, 1988). The priority in these early years involved identifying the proper curriculum content rather than reflecting on the most appropriate pedagogical methods of delivery. In addition, because the students were already bringing their experiences into the classroom reflections and exercises, the need to utilize more community-centered methods was less of a priority. Michael O'Neill, along with Dennis R. Young and other NME pioneers, argued that the field had emerged to prepare those who were currently working in it or were preparing to be leaders and managers of private not-for-profit organizations, while educating public and private sector leaders and managers to interact more effectively with nonprofits (Dobkin Hall, O'Neill, Vinokur-Kaplan, Young, & Lane, 2001). Today, the distinction between very experienced and less experienced professional students is a major characteristic of the student population. This demands more strategic attention about how instructors teach and students learn, while providing more opportunities for university–community partnerships for capacity development. Properly designed experiential education activities, courses, and programs are fundamental for advancing the professional capacity of the sector and its future leaders (Cacciamani, 2017; Fenton & Gallant, 2016).

Active learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, service learning, and place-based learning are some of the more well-known methods associated with experiential education (Godfrey, 1999). With the growth of NME programs internationally, there is also a clearer need for educating professionals not only with theoretical, philosophical, and historical notions but also with feasible projects and activities benefiting the learner and the partnering organizations. In the United States, service learning has also advanced as a preferred pedagogy for nonprofit and management education. Several studies have examined the benefits of experiential service learning for management education (Godfrey & Grasso, 2009; Nikolova & Andersen, 2017) and nonprofit management education (Appe, Rubaii, & Stamp, 2016; S. McDonald & Ogden-Barnes, 2013). Service learning is recognized in the literature as instrumental to critically reflecting on the experience (Sook Lim & Bloomquist, 2015), and it advances the student's career (Govender & Wait, 2017) and improves faculty opinions of applied projects (Wurdinger & Allison, 2017). However, service learning has been less

analyzed regarding its effect on community benefits and nonprofit capacity development. Chupp and Joseph (2010) observed, "Service learning is often implemented with a sole focus on the potential beneficial impact on the student, with little or no emphasis on the possible longer-term beneficial impact on those served by the activity and their broader community" (p. 191). Despite this gap, service learning and other methods of experiential education are increasingly recognized as essential for advancing community engagement values and diversity inclusion (Hickey, 2016).

Experiential education is often a subject of study for the impact of cases, programs, and courses using methods such as service learning in management and nonprofit education (Appel et al., 2016; Chupp & Joseph, 2010). It is generally perceived as advantageous, improving teaching effectiveness, student learning, and career development. In general, teachers acknowledge that lectures are less effective than project-based and teamwork activities, and students consider experiential learning activities more enjoyable and feel that they encourage deeper learning (Aldas, Crispo, Johnson, & Price, 2010; Coker & Porter, 2016; Tracy, Knight, & Rieman, 2014). Employers prefer hiring students who have learned experientially and have worked on real-world projects. Further, alumni appear to benefit more from applied and experiential methods of teaching and learning management and leadership (Herman & Renz, 2007).

The field of NME has not been immune from the advancement of experiential education in higher education (Alice & David, 2005). Carpenter's (2014) review of experiential education in nonprofit-focused graduate degrees associated with the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC) illustrates the varieties and creativities of service-learning and other experiential education methods. Miller-Millesen and Mould (2004) tested how project-based learning methods are instrumental to achieving both students' request for engagement and the need to instill capacity to analyze systemic contexts, understand nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), provide assistance for capacity development, and develop entrepreneurship skills to address real problems. Other studies have shown how experiential education methods can be beneficial to nonprofit and management students' lateral (skills) and vertical (mind-sets) development (M. McDonald & Spence, 2016). Yet, despite these recognized advancements, the strategic integration of experiential education in management and nonprofit education remains in large part underused, sporadic, related to few course subjects, and often only carried on by willing faculty (Carpenter, 2014).

Purpose

A review of literature addresses the interdisciplinary nature of experiential education and helps clarify the use of terms. In addition, the paper reviews the fragmented approaches to experiential learning methods used in nonprofit management education, by introducing three experiential education models that help advance the curricula and program design. We hope the methods and models presented can be helpful to administrators and program reviewers to assess the relevance and impact of their experiential and service-learning educational initiatives to achieve the teaching, learning, and engagement missions of most nonprofit-specific graduate programs (Fletcher, 2005).

This study analyzes the expressions and shared values of experiential education in relation to the literature of nonprofit and management education. It also shows how experiential learning differentiates and affects value creation in the learning process, as well as the effects of experiential education on the development of students as managers and leaders and as competent members of their community. Through a literature review and case study analysis, we advance three models for the strategic integration of experiential education methods into NME. The models have been instrumental for recentering the Master of Nonprofit Administration (MNA) program at the University of San Francisco into an experiential learning and community-centered approach for teaching, learning, and engaging with the community. They can serve other NACC-related NME programs, allowing these programs to strategically review and innovate their program to better integrate service learning, experiential education, and international immersions into their own curricular offerings. This study also encourages the advancement of a shared value in NME—one that advances leadership capacity while addressing community needs.

Literature

Both experiential learning theory and NME emerged around the same time in the early 1980s. Kolb published his model in 1984, explaining the formal holistic perspective, which includes four stages and four learning styles in an integrated cycle of teaching and learning through experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. His experiential learning model, which includes concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, reflected the perceived need of the time to provide practical solutions for professional management careers. His model was later expanded into the Co-Constructed Developmental Teaching Theory, which more explicitly suggests that experiential learning occurs through iterative learning cycles that increase in time and complexity with more and more advanced learning (Coker, Heiser, Taylor, & Book, 2017, p. 19).

O'Neill dedicated his career to understanding the evolution of the field of NME in the United States (O'Neill & Fletcher, 1998; O'Neill & Young, 1988). Apart from his own pioneering leadership in the establishment of the MPA/NOM and its corresponding Institute for Nonprofit Organization and Management in 1983 and MNA in 1985, he is well known for his study of the emergence of the NME field in the 1980s and its expansion in the 1990s (Mirabella, 2007). His historical and contextual analyses attribute the emergence of NME to the expanding relevance of professional education, the growth of management education for organizational capacity, and the growth of the U.S. nonprofit sector following World War II (O'Neill, 2005). Although the MNA at the University of San Francisco historically served nonprofit professionals with an established management career and leadership perspective, the need to balance practice with theory was also a priority. In a 2011 interview, O'Neill explained the need for balancing theory and practice for nonprofit professional (management) education:

Getting too theoretical and too research oriented, not paying enough attention to practical applications, is a mistake; and getting too nuts-and-boltsy, too immersed in practical applications, and not paying enough attention to research and theory is also a mistake. The history of professional education contains many examples of both errors.

I think every theory should have some potential connection with practice, and every major practitioner issue should generate some questions about theory and research. (Bell, 2011, para. 16)

Increasing the field of NME and professional management education in general demands more applications and innovative solutions for integrating learning into practice. In addition to addressing students' diverse learning styles, experiential learning and practical real-world applications in management education combine a business-type of problem-solving attitude (*converges*) with a nonprofit-type of community accompaniment attitude (*accommodators*; Loo, 2002).

Beyond general service-learning programs and activities in liberal arts education, experiential education in professional and nonprofit management-specific education programs aim to build capacity development in organizations. In some cases, the university-community collaboration of NME programs with nonprofits includes developing fundraising plans, marketing plans, strategic plans, or HR systems (Bright, Bright, & Haley, 2007; Hodges, 2013). In other cases, NME programs have engaged with NPOs to increase their technology competencies and their capacity to measure their performance and social impact (Carpenter, 2011; Despard, 2016; Mirabella, 2013). Project-based learning and community-based service learning, multistakeholder partnerships, and participatory action research are among the most common and advanced techniques that NME programs use to engage NPOs in a shared benefit formula to educate students (current and future nonprofit leaders and managers) while benefiting the partnering organizations (Tavanti, Brennan, & Helgeson, 2016).

Carpenter (2014) provides a comprehensive overview and analysis of the integration of experiential education in nonprofit-focused graduate degrees associated with NACC. Her review of 49 program websites, 405 course syllabi, and 12 qualitative interviews with master's program representatives shows a diverse and sporadic experiential education approach to NME. The study revealed diverse approaches classified around capstones, practicums, internships, fieldwork, and other experiential learning techniques. The most frequent use of experiential learning methods appeared in nonprofit subjects and courses centered on fundraising and development, organizational assessment, marketing, policy, and evaluation (Carpenter, 2014, p. 127), and the integration of experiential learning techniques were more prevalent in capstone and practicum projects, internships, and project consulting-based learning (Carpenter, 2014, p. 128). The study also provides a useful hierarchy of typologies of experiential education from studying a nonprofit (organization or aspect of it) but without direct interactions with the nonprofit being studied, to studying a nonprofit with interaction in some manner (e.g., interviews of the staff or executives within a nonprofit), to presenting findings to the nonprofit, to working collaboratively with the nonprofit to create the project (Carpenter, 2014, p. 132). Her comprehensive review appears to indicate that there are several experiences of experiential education in NME, but that they can benefit from better integration and strategic prioritization.

The systematic implementation and integration of experiential education in NME programs may also be slow to advance because of the unclear definitions of interrelated but distinguished terms, methods, and approaches. The literature often uses the terms *experiential education* and *experiential learning* interchangeably. Itin (1999) observed "that nearly identical definitions have been ascribed to experiential learning and

experiential education only serves to cloud discussion” (p. 91). Despite this mix-up in the terminology, the experiential education literature is ever expanding and represents a variety of methods, approaches, and innovative cases. It also represents the relevance and impact of experiential learning across disciplines and fields. It is more than “learning by doing” and goes beyond “just experiencing” (Fox, 2008).

The Association for Experiential Education (n.d.) defines experiential learning in the context of a growing field characterized by specific applied methods, a value-based philosophy, and shared benefits across teaching, learning, and communities:

Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people’s capacity to contribute to their communities. (para. 4)

This definition is not exclusive to formal education, but it is relevant to a general approach to teaching, learning, and engagement. A wide diversity of methods, strategies, and approaches relate to practices of experiential learning across disciplines. However, such a diversity is also a source of confusion in the field.

Wurdinger and Carlson (2010) provide a useful overview of the most effective approaches to experiential learning:

1. **Active Learning:** A group of experiential learning activities associated with classroom strategies such as role playing, simulation, debates, presentations, and case studies.
2. **Problem-Based Learning:** Inquiry-based learning activities through in-depth investigations, self-directed research, and group-work inquiries.
3. **Project-Based Learning:** A type of experiential learning that stimulates students’ interests while developing their project management capacity, technology, and research skills and analytical presentation capacity. It can be individual or group work, teacher directed, student directed, or a combination of the two.
4. **Service Learning:** A well-known approach to teaching and learning that often includes planning (community needs), action (service), and reflection (learning). The emphasis is on learning. It can be student centered or community based.
5. **Placed-Based Learning:** A learning focused on a particular place or context. It is a holistic approach to education that uses the immersion into a context to support the vitality of a community. It can be far (global) or near (local).

The fields of management and nonprofit education aim to develop leaders with proper mind-sets and specific skills (Tavanti & Davis, 2017). These two purposes align well with the applied and reflective methods of experiential education, whose methods can be crucial for developing interdisciplinary values while integrating students’ “hard skills” and “soft skills” (Coker et al., 2017). Management in general and nonprofit management in particular require the development of leaders and managers capable of administering organizations and programs that are efficient and effective in achieving their mission while achieving sustainable shared values and social and global impact.

In a special issue of the *Journal of Management Education*, Bevan and Kipka (2012) presented the value of diverse methods relevant to the practice of experiential learning in management education. They argued,

Experiential learning is an interdisciplinary approach based in management, education and psychology, and implicating a holistic process of action-reflection based on experience-abstraction. It is particularly powerful in connection with management education as it is perceived to be effective in the support of training and education in fields as diverse as talent management, leadership performance, competence development, change management, community involvement, volunteering, cross-cultural training and entrepreneurship. (pp. 193–194)

With the transformation of the management education field becoming more socially responsible (Tavanti & Wilp, 2015), and with the ever growing paradigm shift from shareholders to stakeholders to creating sustainable values and shared benefits (Nikolova & Andersen, 2017), experiential education is in a pivotal position to develop future leaders and managers. Values such as community development, diversity inclusion, and empathic communication—central values to the development of nonprofit leaders—can also be added to general management education through the integration of experiential learning and service-learning methods. Several studies indicate the positive outcome of such integration (Everhart, 2016; O'Brien, Wittmer, & Ebrahimi, 2017). In recent years, the integration of service learning and experiential learning has also been increasing in management and entrepreneurship education (Kenworthy-U'Ren & Peterson, 2005; Moylan, Gallagher, & Heagney, 2016). More recently, the field of experiential learning and service learning has been widening and deepening its scope with the term *community engagement learning* (Makani & Rajan, 2016).

Most of the literature on experiential and service learning highlights the benefits of various methods into student learning and teacher effectiveness. However, the benefit of experiential learning for community organizations and NPOs has been less examined (Carpenter, 2011; Gazley, Littlepage, & Bennett, 2012; O'Brien, Wittmer, & Ebrahimi, 2017). Programs that integrate experiential learning appear to be popular among nonprofit management students who recognize the value added for their learning and career development. Miller-Millesen and Mould (2004) observed that

a key consideration for students in selecting a program was engagement. That is, students want practical, relevant, time-sensitive information that will build on and refine their hands-on experience and provide them with the skills necessary to be responsive to the challenges that face nonprofit managers today. (p. 247)

Responding to student expectations while promoting the capacity development needs of NPOs and community organizations requires faculty and administrators to strongly consider a project-based learning curriculum.

Yet experience alone is not enough. Like service learning, experiential learning requires the right amount of student reflection and articulation of the learning outcomes of related courses in the nonprofit management curricula. Chupp and Joseph (2010) referred to *experiential service learning* and the importance of deep reflection as part of the student experience and effective service-learning experience. They stated,

Without a well-designed opportunity for reflection about the service experience, proponents of experiential service learning argue that the primary purpose of service—enhanced student learning of classroom content—may not happen. . . . Without structured critical reflection, it is possible that students do not consider their service experience in its larger social political context, nor determine implications for how to apply the experience to future action (p. 194).

Coker and Porter (2015) reviewed the various positive impacts that experiential learning has on students' gains for deeper learning, practical competence, persistence rates, civic engagement, appreciation of diversity, and professional networks, among others (p. 66). They also recognized that a diversity of experiential learning methods is necessary, as no one unique formula can effectively implement experiential education in universities and programs. However, they also suggested that "providing a spectrum of experiential-learning opportunities, framing experiences for broad liberal-learning outcomes, and giving all students access to each type of experience" (p. 72) are essential for strategic implementation and integration of experiential learning.

Method

The examination of the literature is crucial for understanding the interdisciplinary nature of experiential education and its relevance to the value of integrating it in nonprofit and management education. Although experiential learning and service learning have a long history with a clear alignment with nonprofit values of community service and capacity development, their integration in the literature needs to be distinguished between teaching, learning, and shared benefits. Based on the analysis of various models of experiential learning in NME linked to the literature and reflected in cases studies at DePaul University and the University of San Francisco, we provide three models to distinguish and formulate community-centered, experientially positioned, and global and local engagement. A sample of comments from University of San Francisco MNA students who participated in the experiential learning projects of the program were captured in previous surveys for program evaluations and assessment of learning (University of San Francisco, School of Management, 2017). The systemic and strategic models aim to clarify the field of experiential learning in their relevance and benefit to community needs, student development, and global citizenship education. The strategic thinking and integrative designs represented by these models reflect the literature, as well as the practice of students, faculty, and administrators involved in NME global, community, and experiential learning.

Findings

Today, the benefit of using experiential learning in classroom education is often explained by the ancient Chinese proverb: "I hear, and I forget. I see, and I remember. I do, and I understand." However, when experiential learning methods are embedded into a comprehensive strategy for experiential and community-centered education, the benefits are visible not only at the levels of teaching and learning. The integration of these applied, practical, and collaborative methods helps promote innovative approaches to NME that can also benefit the capacity needs of the nonprofit and social sectors.

In 2014, the University of San Francisco's MNA program revised its teaching and learning methods, making each course of the program experientially and community centered. This shift corresponded to the sharpening of a Capstone course that addresses data analysis relevant to NPOs and the social sector, in addition to benefiting student career and leadership development. It also integrated a practicum course with team- and project-based consultancies for preselected nonprofits and social enterprises. In addition, every course, from leadership ethics to strategic governance, to fundraising and marketing, has at least one experiential and project-based activity benefiting one or more nonprofits. This shift moves the teaching and learning methods from a teacher–student model into a university–community partnership model.

The University of San Francisco MNA in its MNA 3.0 version of the curriculum recenters its NME content around applied methods and community-driven values. Through in-class adapted methods of teaching and learning such as flipped classrooms, multimodality participation platforms, professional speakers, simulation, debates, case studies, and project- and problem-based activities, the program has increased the engagement experience of graduate students. In addition, through consultancy courses, professional mentorships, alumni networks, participation and organization of conferences and events, and participation and presentations of applied research projects for social impact and data analysis, MNA students become more integral actors in the fabric of the San Francisco Bay Area nonprofit ecosystem (Figure 1). The experiences are integrated in the curriculum and courses through various hermeneutical and discernment methods of analysis for going deeper into the issues related to leadership, organizations, and systems. They use a version of the Ignatian pedagogical principle (Van Hise & Massey, 2010) adapted into the experience, analysis, action, evaluation, and contextualization of nonprofit education and capacity development (Figure 2). In the same year, the MNA program also launched the first Academic Global Immersion (AGI) Program, a short-term study abroad experience in which students study, visit, and learn directly from nonprofits and NGOs working on refugee service management internationally. MNA students learn from visiting and experiencing the work of organizations such as Doctors Without Borders and Save the Children, along with Jesuit Refugee Service, Centro Astalli, and the UN Refugee Agency. They follow a specific methodology that integrates experiential learning with international and global immersion (Figure 3). Their international experience in Rome, Italy, is integrated and contextualized through comparative policy analyses, conferences, and projects benefiting San Francisco Bay Area NPOs and NGOs, as well as social enterprises working on refugee resettlement, forced migration services, unaccompanied minors, and anti-human trafficking (AGI Program, 2015).

The MNA 3.0 student perceives these project-based and community-centered methods to be beneficial to their educational experience and nonprofit careers. The following are a sample of the student comments about the NPO consulting projects in the MNA program (School of Management MNA, 2016):

- The MNA program hands-on course was directly applicable to my day-to-day work in the nonprofit sector, which fostered the knowledge and confidence for me to apply for and obtain two promotions during my time in the program.
- As part of the MNA program, I completed a consulting project for Thousand Currents, creating a customized dashboard for extracting key performance

indicators from across all 25 grantee annual reports that would allow for ease of capturing markers of depth and breadth of impact to be communicated to diverse audiences.

- I worked on a group presentation to build a strategic framework for the Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley. We helped to guide the organization's future to build the core skills we learned in class. It was a great hands-on learning experience for all of us.
- Through the participation of the projects in the MNA, I acquired confidence in research and critical thinking skills.
- These were key for furthering my professional career by increasing my capacity to understand and apply research skills for the development of nonprofit organizational capacity and the connections I made will surely continue to my professional career.
- The projects we completed in the practicum and capstone were helpful for me to obtain essential tools for addressing social issues on a larger scale, and these have increased my chances of building a sustainable and impactful social career.
- The projects I completed during the MNA program gave me a recognition amongst the board at my organization. As a result, I was promoted more than once.

The integration of experiential learning in a well-established NME program such as the MNA also creates a series of challenges in relation to institutional support, faculty participation, and community impact. Some of the questions that emerged and were discussed included the following:

1. What institutional support should be provided to the university–community partnerships and NPO capacity development projects?
2. How can the existing faculty be engaged and prepared to adequately and effectively integrate project-based learning in their teaching?
3. How can we reach and respond to the needs of NPOs, NGOs, and community-based organizations beyond the existing circles and known organizations to students?

These crucial questions for the effective adoption of the experiential methods were answered through the expert guidance of the MNA Advisory Board, which represented the MNA program stakeholders including nonprofit leaders, alumni, students, faculty, and administrators. The strategic changes emerged from the adoption of comprehensive models for promoting shared values for experiential nonprofit education (Model 1), for embedding a hermeneutical praxis into nonprofit education (Model 2), and for internationalizing the curriculum with global nonprofit experiential learning initiatives (Model 3).

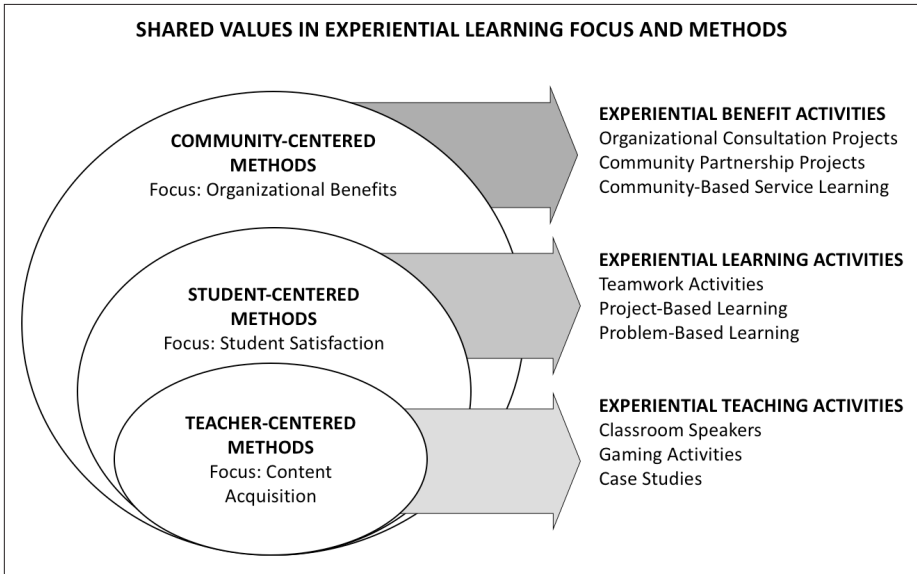


Figure 1. Model 1: Shared values for experiential nonprofit education. Copyright © 2017 Marco Tavanti, PhD, & Elizabeth A. Wilp.

The first model that emerged from the analysis of this process aims to integrate the various aspects of experiential teaching and learning into three interrelated levels relevant to instructors, students, and communities. The comprehensive integration of all methods should be helpful for reviewing how the teaching is done, how students best learn, and how the community can most benefit. While this tripartition does not offer much to the literature, it is important for shifting the educational and institutional mind-set from teaching to learning and from engagement to measurable benefits and social impact. It can also be instrumental for replicating existing service-learning pedagogical models that have demonstrated the ability to benefit student learning and community impact equally (Gerstenblatt & Gilbert, 2014).

The three concentric frameworks of methods represent an evolution in shared value experiential activities. A well-designed integration of experiential learning in NME should manifest these shared values in teaching (content), learning (students), and engagement (community). The model also represents an evolution in the focus and social-community relevance in experiential learning going from a teacher-centered to a student-centered and then a community-centered method. While experiential learning can be integrated at all three levels, the community-centered level becomes the benchmark for quality and transformational experiential education. This level cannot be limited simply to internships, but seeks to integrate organizational consulting projects, partnerships with community-based organizations, business community and other institutions, and community-based service learning. This third level of experiential learning must be valuable to the community and partnering organizations. Its impact must be relevant to the community, along with providing an integrated transformation for students, faculty and universities through multidisciplinary and multimodality teaching, research, and service (Soska, Sullivan-Cosetti, & Pasupuleti, 2010).

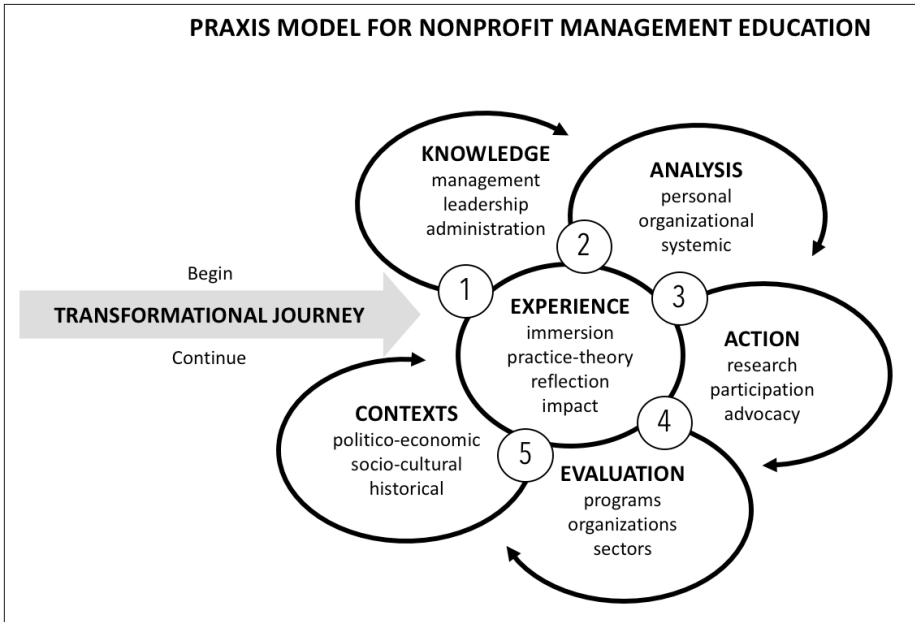


Figure 2. Model 2: Hermeneutical praxis for nonprofit education. Copyright © 2017 Marco Tavanti, PhD, & Elizabeth A. Wilp.

An effective integration of experiential education in NME programs considers a strategy for equally benefiting student learning and advancing the benefits to partnering nonprofits and community organizations. The praxis model (theory and practice) is a five-step design for centering experience into the learning and for making it a transformational journey for students and the organizations involved. Jesuit traditions for higher learning have been advancing praxis models known as Ignatian pedagogies to integrate learning with social engagement, social analysis, and social change (Drwecki, 2015; Lu & Rosen, 2015).

The Ignatian pedagogical principles apply well to the social values and concerns inherent to nonprofit education. They provide a strategy for teaching, learning, and engagement that can easily be integrated into the values and practices of NME. The praxis model can be applicable to a variety of subjects and fields, but it becomes a priority in NME where leadership/management competency development and organizational/sector capacity development are a priority. First, this model integrates knowledge with the capacity to read the complexity of organizational management and leadership and the capacity to read situations. Second, it explores the capacity to analyze complex situations across sectors and systems, organizations and institutions, and interpersonal and relational. Third, this model seeks to transform knowledge and analysis into action for community development, organizational change, and sector capacity. Fourth, the monitoring and evaluation of the process needs to become part of the process. The fifth and final element in this experientially centered model endeavors to develop capacity to recognize the politico-economic and socio-cultural contexts across diverse communities, societies, and nations. The model highlights an ongoing transformational

journey recentered in experiential engagement as practicum, community, and international immersions.

The praxis model can be a process (journey) for articulating knowledge acquisition for leadership, management, and administration into real-world interactions with nonprofit sectors, organizations, and programs that need more analysis, evaluation, and action. The MNA Program has integrated this model throughout the program, but specifically in the practicum course where students manage nonprofit consulting projects for program evaluation and social impact analysis. The praxis model is instrumental in helping link practice with theory and helping students to engage in deeper and more difficult conversations about systemic issues in the diverse contexts of the nonprofit sector and its leaders. It can be the discernment (analytical) tool that benefits students in their engaged learning processes and nonprofits in their capacity development processes (Bright et al., 2007). The praxis model depicts the wide-ranging and diverse experiences a student will embark on as a part of bridging social philanthropy, education, career, and how to best engage and work within the nonprofit sector.

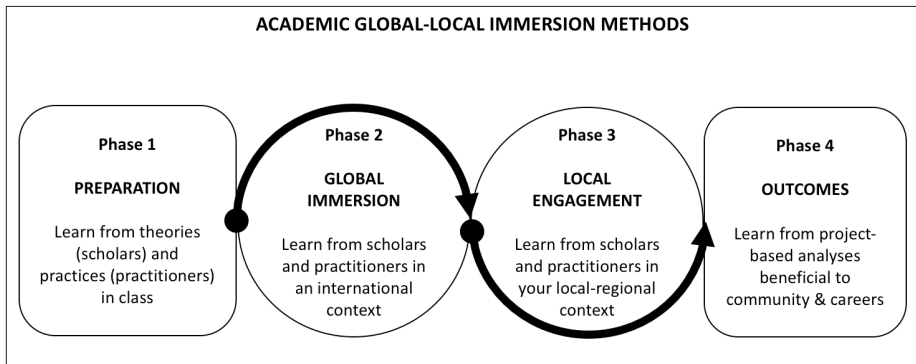


Figure 3. Model 3: Global nonprofit experiential learning. Copyright © 2017 Marco Tavanti, PhD, & Elizabeth A. Wilp.

The Global-Local Model illustrates the stages designed to favor the connection between international and national experiences that are educationally valuable and beneficial to the partnering organizations. The four phases of experiential learning-integrated design include the preparation on the subjects (Phase 1), a coordinated short-term and intensive global immersion (Phase 2), a local engagement with volunteer organizations, NGOs, social enterprises, and government representatives defending the rights of forced migrants (Phase 3), and negotiated projects that fulfill the course requirements and respond to the needs of partnering organizations (Phase 4).

The University of San Francisco’s MNA has successfully integrated academic global immersions into its NME. The model was first developed during the design of a program focused on refugee service management and the exploration of international organizational models for humanitarian emergency management. In this case, the design of the program, which includes an immersion in Rome, Italy, was intentionally integrated in four stages. First, the program gave a preparation with a theoretical foundation on humanitarian emergency management, a practical managerial guide,

and a policy analyses for practitioners and policy makers. Second, it gave students an emotionally and intellectually engaging experience by partnering with organizations such as the United Nations Refugee Agency, Jesuit Refugee Services, and Centro Astalli and Caritas Rome for their direct services to refugees. Third, it accompanied students to bring home their international learning by connecting them with NPOs and NGOs working on forced migration and refugee resettlement in anti-human trafficking. Fourth, it aligned the course requirements with the possible responses and services to the needs of the partnering organizations. Immersion projects such as the AGI Program have directed students' career focus toward finding social enterprise solutions to refugee integration or toward finding sustainable business solutions to combating modern slavery (notforsalecampaign.org). Students themselves benefit from the immersion programs, but this experience with an international educational program may also influence the type of work or organization with which they choose to be involved in the future. They also develop and reaffirm their dedication to be agents of change in the world and compassionate, civic-minded members of different communities. Godfrey (2009) wrote, "A willingness to care precedes a willingness to act" (p. 32).

The Global-Local Model shows how to connect local communities to community engagement internationally. The study of nonprofit and nongovernmental education can benefit from international exposures, partnerships, and global perspectives on nationally diverse legal organizational structures. However, effective international experiential integration requires an "international-by-design" perspective (Tavanti, 2017). Such a model should center on integrating experiential education that benefits community partners globally and locally. It can avoid "academic tourism" and "poverty tourism" (Tavanti & Evans, 2008) by seeking long-term collaborations and partnerships with key local organizations.

Experiential learning beyond borders has been done for a long time. Some American universities have been pioneers in the strategic integration of global immersion and study abroad models in nonprofit and public service education (Murphy & Meyer, 2012). Internationalization of NME has often included various types of international partnerships and collaborative projects in diverse subjects and courses (Miller-Millesen & Mould, 2004). This model is also related to the literature and best practices for experiential learning and experiential education. The four-phase trajectory integrated into the AGI-Rome program resembles Kolb's experiential learning cycle, which includes the concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984). In addition, the AGI-Rome follows the Arrupe Immersion Program's experience-reflection method that is common in Jesuit service-learning methods (Kronick, Cunningham, & Gourley, 2011). The integration of personal and professional experience is essential to moving from experience to analysis, but it also helps develop a mindfulness for experiential learning (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009) and a mind-set for community-based service learning (Hammersley, 2012). International immersions give students an opportunity to view philanthropy from a global perspective. Global issues are often the focus of many NGOs, even those organizations located in domestic locales. NGOs whose purpose is to serve, for example, refugees in Italy could benefit from a student who has had an international immersion experience.

Discussion

In graduate NME, experiential learning is and should be more than active learning or service learning. It is about working with NPOs to increase their organizational capacity, while accompanying students to become more effective in their competencies and capacity to consult, assess, and collaborate. The current shifts from experiential learning to experiential education and from service learning to community-engaged learning show the contributions of these models. The strategies and contextualization of the experiences in the University of San Francisco's MNA Program can be adapted by other institutions and NME programs. They can do this by considering a community-centered model of education (Model 1), by considering a pedagogical praxis of students and community transformation (Model 2), and by designing programs that are relevant to local and global communities (Model 3).

In relation to the local and global integration of experiential education in NME, the Nonprofit Academic Centers Council (NACC, 2015) promotes "more pronounced global and international perspectives" (p. 3) as well as innovation and social enterprise content areas in its 2015 Curricular Guidelines. NACC also states, "Community engagement is affirmed as an essential element of undergraduate education. It is NACC's position that a high quality undergraduate experience involves learning through serving by engaging it with stakeholder communities in thoughtful, intentional, and mutually beneficial ways" (p. 20). These models should help advance the idea of making experiential learning a central element also in master and doctoral degree programs. These programs would need to be more clearly designed to integrate skill-based competencies of students through participatory action research, nonprofit consulting projects, and project-based learning in local and global settings.

The three models also help clarify interrelated but distinctive values in the experiential education field. The community can no longer be seen as just an experimental laboratory for academic institutions. Dewey (1938), for example, while inspiring educators to change the focus from teachers (teaching and content) to students (experience and learning), did not successfully address public good and community engagement (Anderson, 2018). Dewey's inspiring ideas were limited by the University of Chicago's Lab School (that he founded in 1894), which practiced isolating "experience" from "learning" and from community engagement (Knoll, 2015). Merely leaving the classroom to explore the world does not necessarily mean that this educational process benefits student learning or addresses community needs. This educational design is missing important steps. In fact, these missing steps may lead to "manipulation" of the targeted community for the students' own learning and research objectives, without consideration of community needs. This approach to travel the world or even the neighborhood dissociates ethical, social, and systemic issues from the immersion experience (Parmentier & Moore, 2016).

Experiential learning in NME can be instrumental in developing a student's mind-set along his or her soft skills and hard skills. Both the student development directions in "depth loosely correspond with hard skills of the workplace," and the "breadth loosely correspond with soft skills" (Coker et al., 2017, p. 20), and elements often visible in experiential learning programs are highly valued by employers (Hart Research Associates, 2013). Experiential learning methods in the classroom and in student

projects are helpful, but not enough. The teaching methods should go beyond case studies, simulations, games, cooperative learning, problem learning, and action learning (Awaysheh & Bonfiglio, 2017; David & Clive, 2012; Eckhaus, Klein, & Kantor, 2017; Evans, 2016; Holtham & Rich, 2012) and include more direct community-relevant and possibly beneficial program evaluation, social impact analysis, and partnership project internships, along with service-learning, outdoor education, and other work-related experiences. Some of these methods are “practical” and “hands-on,” but they differ in the degree of “real-world” exposure and service benefit to organizations. The choice of experiential learning methods ultimately depends on the learning objective and mission of the program. It also depends on the university–community engagement values of the program and courses chosen to implement these methods. In other words, the diversity of experiential learning methods shows various degrees of value creation beneficial to the community beyond content acquisition and student active participation. Community-centered methods of teaching can also encourage students to reach out to organizations that interest them. This gives students the opportunity to take initiative of their own education and learn more about a given organization or social cause. The student in this instance is a sort of representative of the program and the university, and this can be a great networking opportunity for the student.

When students become responsible for reporting their research about a topic or organization to the rest of their cohort, this opens up peer engagement among students on certain organizations and social issues that may be unfamiliar to them. In student-centered methods of teaching, students can deliver the content and messages to one another, work together on projects and presentations, and lead class discussions, which all foster healthy practices in communication. Community-centered methods of teaching and learning promote students’, teachers’, and the program’s capacity to engage with outside organizations and stakeholders within the community. This method can improve academic social responsibility and high-impact university–community relations that demonstrate academic impact to university stakeholders (Gazley, Bennett, & Littlepage, 2013). The adoption of this community-centered approach gives academic institutions and NME programs the opportunity to reach out to organizations that are interested and willing to partner in an ecosystem in which all can benefit from the collaboration.

The praxis model echoes the experience–reflection and analysis–action elements often described in service-learning literature (Heffernan, 2001). However, centering experiential education in graduate NME implies more than starting a service-learning course (Bucco & Busch, 1996) and requires university commitment to building community partnerships (Bushouse, 2005; Enos & Morton, 2003). Graduate nonprofit students, if properly supported and prepared, can substantially contribute to nonprofit organizational capacity through collaborative analytical projects beyond service learning and internships. The prioritization and adaptation of experiential educational opportunities in NME programs would ultimately depend on the strategic directions of the degree or program and its contextual and location opportunities (Dobkin Hall et al., 2001). However, the planning, administration, and review of NME should also include the review of the benefits (or lack thereof) to the host institutions and community partnering NPOs (Gazley et al., 2012). Certain partnerships between a graduate NME university program and NPOs can establish the university as a member of the

nonprofit sector and can provide learning opportunities for students, job placement for students, and an exchange of information and resources between the organization and the university. Strong relationships and honest feedback between the organization and university can better serve the future of an NME program, as well as student learning outcomes.

Implications and Recommendations

Experiential learning methods and good practices in management and nonprofit education need to be taken more seriously in academic centers, colleges, and universities. University administrators and NME faculty can make a strategic shift from a sporadic approach of experiential learning, project-based learning, service learning, and internships into a more comprehensive and integrated model for experiential education centered in the courses, curricula, and programs.

A more critical and in-depth analysis of the causes of fragmented use of experiential learning—especially in graduate NME—should be completed. Faculty, program directors, and school administrators should ask the important questions about the role that the community plays in the designs, collaborations, and reviews of courses and projects in nonprofit education. Perhaps, NACC's contribution to a standardized NME with its curricular guidelines, indicators of institutional quality, and the accreditation process could also include a “best practices” effort in community-centered approaches that benefit the students, community, and university through well-planned experiential education practices. Such an analysis may also require a cultural shift in academia, as some studies attribute this misalignment of experiential approaches in management and nonprofit education to the lack of higher education institutional commitment to community engagement (Holland, 2009; Jacob, Sutin, Weidman, & Yeager, 2015), to faculty perceptions of fieldwork and experiential learning (Miller, Kovacs, Wright, Corcoran, & Rosenblum, 2005; Wurdinger & Allison, 2017), and to the overall shortage of management programs that provide real-world skills for graduates to compete in the marketplace (Eckhaus et al., 2017).

The implementation and integration of experiential education in academic programs needs to be strategic and effective in engaging faculty and staff (Yahui, 2016) while systematically and inclusively measuring community-specific benefits (Voss, Mathews, Fossen, Scott, & Schaefer, 2015). Although innovative teaching and learning practices remain a responsibility of faculty, the implementation of a community-centered approach requires a stakeholder model of planning and evaluation. The models reviewed in this article, supported by the literature on experiential learning, suggest useful recommendations to faculty and administrators who would like to put strategic and effective experiential and community-engaged education into their NME courses and programs.

Integrating experiential learning strategies into NME requires a review of programmatic elements of the learning process and pragmatic dynamics of decision making for university–community engagement. At a first level, NME chairs, program directors, and faculty should strategically review the values and capacity of their curriculum.

1. **Curricula Review:** Review the course syllabi to add or modify its requirements to include products (papers, reports, presentations, analyses, etc.) emerged from partnering with organizations and with leaders and managers

in the nonprofit sector. Ritter, Small, Mortimer, and Doll (2018) suggested that the review of the curricula could also reflect a design for workplace readiness.

2. **Learning Assessment:** Review the learning outcomes of the program and related courses to map the objectives and matrices measuring not only content acquisition and student perceptions but also concrete products shared with the community. The formulation of assessments in NME experiential learning could benefit from the literature on high-impact educational practices (Vogt & Skop, 2017).
3. **Community Engagement:** Review the program's strengths and assets in the area to strategically evaluate how the program can contribute to the capacity development of local and regional NPOs, social sector institutions, or social enterprises. The large literature on community-based service learning could be helpful for the formulation of NME community engagement practice. Studies such as Bringle and Hatcher's (2012) can also be instrumental for determining how applied and multidisciplinary research can be beneficial in community-engaged NME.
4. **Cross-Sector Collaborations:** Review the specificity, innovation, and impact of nonprofit curricula in the context of management education and for the promotion of engaged education across and beyond sectors (Paton, Mordaunt, & Cornforth, 2007).
5. **Adult and Professional Values:** Renew the practices of experiential learning in the context of adult and professional education. This makes the students more capable agents for providing service to the community aligned with their skills and preferences of organizational partnerships (Reed, Rosing, Rosenberg, & Statham, 2015).

At a second level and from an administrative standpoint, stakeholders of an NME program should facilitate processes and decision making at the department, college, and university level.

6. **University–Community Collaborations:** For curricula and cocurricular programs, promote university–community partnerships that connect students to organizations and organizations to programs. Numerous studies have shown the benefit of formal and long-term university–community partnerships for effective community-based learning, high-impact experiential learning, and meaningful benefits to partnering organizations (Kindred & Petrescu, 2015; Rosenberg, Karp, & Baldwin, 2016).
7. **Value and Promote Experiences:** Promote hiring and promotion and tenure criteria that adequately recognize the background and contributions to the community through participatory research projects and the like with demonstrated benefits to the community. The values and practice of experiential education would need to be recognized in the promotion and tenure process of NME programs, schools and colleges, and institutions. Efforts to build relations in the community and to produce collaborative outcomes require committed faculty and academic institutions that recognize and award these practices. Various studies in the literature address these discussions and best practices for the recognition and integrations of experiential education

practices into the promotion and tenure criteria of evaluation (Carnicelli & Boluk, 2017; Leugers, Whalen, Couch, King, & Prendeville, 2009).

8. **Mission Alignment and Integration:** Promote innovative processes for sharing knowledge (research), teaching opportunities (seminars, certificates, symposia, etc.), and service initiatives (e.g., service day) that benefit the community in line with the university mission and vision. Jesuit values of social justice in the community clearly align with the values of experiential and community-based NME (Streetman, 2015). But the alignment needs to be intentional and strategically aligned. That is why every academic institution has the possibility and responsibility to recognize the contribution to experiential NME into their civic, public, community, social, philanthropic, and global values. Experiential NME can be representative of what Harkavy (2006) describes as the role of all universities to advance citizenship and social justice in the 21st century.
9. **Stakeholder's Voice:** Promote the assessment of NME with the systematic inclusion of community engagement evaluation, and consider the stakeholder's voices in the assessment. Stakeholder engagement can be critical for social innovation and social impact and can be promoted through participatory action research and mixed-methods assessments and evaluations integrated in experiential NME courses, assignments, practicums, and capstones. Several studies show how stakeholder engagement and participatory action research are essential elements for value co-creation between nonprofit organizations and public-private partnerships (Chen-Fu Yang & Tung-Jung, 2016; Nikolova & Andersen, 2017).
10. **Higher Education Dialogue:** Promote the university, department, program, and course practices in experiential learning aligned with the best practice and recommendations of institutions and associations such as Campus Compact and the National Society for Experiential Education. In addition, several other higher education initiatives combine well with the experiential values for social change. Among them, the United Nations Academic Impact, the United Nations Global Compact, the Principles of Responsible Management Education, and Higher Education Sustainability Initiative can provide more opportunities for institutional collaborations and shared commitments. Even the interinstitutional conversations headed by Campus Compact on the Carnegie Engagement Classification can be beneficial to institutions that want to strategically integrate experiential learning into their NME and related programs (Noel & Earwicker, 2015).

These strategic implementations at curricular and institutional levels can be instrumental in making experiential learning more than a corollary expression of student services to the community. Experiential learning in the context of nonprofit education is and should be more than an effective method for teaching and learning. Various programs demonstrate that truly integrated experiential education can be a powerful tool for a university's contributions toward the development of capacities in the nonprofit sector. The impact of NME on stakeholders and constituents has been highlighted as a priority in nonprofit education, in previous studies (Mirabella & Wish, 1999), and

it represents an even more urgent priority in relation to the shared values that NME can provide through experiential education. Mainstreaming experiential learning into management education requires pedagogical experimentations, along with innovative approaches with organizational consulting, community immersions, hybrid education, and service learning (Killian, 2004).

Limitations and Delimitations

These models will need to be integrated, adapted, and tested regarding their impact on the program's teaching, student's learning, and community's impact. These models are important for guiding faculty and administrators to design innovative and integrative experiential learning programs. While based on existing studies and proven curricular and programmatic experiences, they do not claim to provide additional data to validate the needs, processes, and outcomes of experiential methods integrations. Future studies need to assess the benefits of university–community partnerships in experiential learning programs for NME. The adoption of these integrative, strategic, and systemic models would also need more specific articulations into the specifics of program learning goals and course learning outcomes, mapped with assignments and activities. This generic modeling is only the first step in designing appropriate experiential education programs that will hopefully become a default approach in NME.

Conclusion

This study reviewed experiential learning in its typology, classification, and relevance to NME and in relation to social values and community engagement. It reviewed the processes and learned models emerged from the strategic placement of experiential education at the University of San Francisco's MNA Program and reviewed these approaches in relation to pedagogic methods, community benefits, and global immersions. The suggested strategies and systemic models presented in this study can help the strategic advancement of NME programs in their responsibility, first, to advance quality knowledge through sound research in the nonprofit field; second, to advance effective and innovative strategies to teach and learn NME from a praxis (theory and practice) standpoint; and third, to advance the development of nonprofit leaders, managers, and administrators capable of improving the sector and its NPOs and institutions. Finally, the effective integration of experiential education in NME should also lead to the development of capacity in NPOs and their sectors through university–community partnerships. As the practices and studies of social impact and community engagement methods advance, we hope that these systematic and strategic models inspire more commitments to make our educational programs more responsive to the needs of NPOs. We also hope that the field of NME, as it becomes more established, recognized, and standardized in the respect of its diversity, can also recognize the importance of community benefits in the various educational missions and programs. The systematic, effective, and comprehensive integration of experiential learning in NME may ultimately help make our sector the heart of social innovation, social transformation, and social impact.

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