12-11-2016

Integrated Experiential Education: Definitions and a Conceptual Model

Lara Fenton
University of Manitoba, fentonl@umanitoba.ca

Karen Gallant
Dalhousie University

Recommended Citation

Integrated Experiential Education: Definitions and a Conceptual Model

Abstract

Universities are currently embracing community engagement strategies to increase opportunities for student learning in community settings such as community organizations. Experiential learning is often touted as the pedagogy underlying such experiences. We undertook a research project exploring the challenges and benefits for students and faculty who are offering integrated experiential curriculum in universities within North American Recreation and Leisure studies programs. We also address the ways in which interviewees defined experiential, and in particular, integrated experiential education. In the paper, we propose a model, defining the breadth of integrated experiential education approaches across continua of place, curriculum, philosophy, instructor role, and content. The model provides a tool for both understanding common aspects of integrated experiential approaches and identifying where specific experiential activities lie across these continua.

De nos jours, les universités ont recours aux stratégies d'engagement communautaire afin de donner aux étudiants de plus grandes possibilités d'apprentissage dans les milieux communautaires tels que les organismes communautaires. L'apprentissage par l'expérience est souvent présenté comme étant la pédagogie sous-jacente à de telles expériences. Nous avons entrepris un projet de recherche visant à explorer les défis et les avantages pour les étudiants et les professeurs qui offrent des programmes d'études intégrés basés sur l'expérience dans les universités nord-américaines au sein de programmes d'Études en loisirs et en récréologie. Nous nous sommes également intéressés aux manières dont les personnes interviewées définissent les termes « basé sur l'expérience », en particulier l'enseignement intégré basé sur l'expérience. Dans cet article, nous proposons un modèle qui définit l'étendue des approches de l'enseignement intégré basé sur l'expérience indépendamment des lieux, des programmes d'études, des philosophies, des rôles des instructeurs et des contenus. Le modèle présente un outil pour comprendre les aspects communs des approches de l'enseignement intégré basé sur l'expérience et par ailleurs, il identifie où se situent les activités spécifiquement basées sur l'expérience d'un bout à l'autre du continuum.

Current rhetoric in academe entertains the notion of placing the community that surrounds the university at the heart of student learning, and research supports the prevalence of these perspectives (e.g., Athavale, Davis, & Myring, 2008). For example, our recreation and leisure program is in the process of undertaking a curriculum review to better immerse our experiential learning opportunities within the surrounding community. This deliberate effort to work with local community organizations is also supported by Dalhousie University's strategic plan, which includes references to community engagement, community-engaged learning, and community-engaged scholarship as essential elements of university teaching, research, and scholarship. Engaging students in the surrounding community often occurs through experiential opportunities and can have many different labels, including volunteering, field placements, internships, and integrated curriculum. What these terms all have in common is rooting student learning within the surrounding community and the use of experiential theories and practices.

Research supports the notion that students benefit from spending time working and learning in community contexts where students can apply theory and increase their awareness of social issues (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). However, while there has been longstanding research and dialogue on the use of experiential theories and practices in university environments, there is currently little research that explores the practice of integrated experiential education (e.g., see the Special issue of *Schole*, 2013, volume 28, issue 1), although there has been much written on the theory (Breunig, 2005, 2014; Katz, 2013; Loepp, 1999; Shoemaker, 1989). Integrated experiential education is closely related to experiential education, where first hand experiences are paramount; however, "integration" is explicit about (a) the interdisciplinary nature of coursework (e.g., through block courses) which emphasizes relationships among subjects, rather than independent courses that focus on a single subject area (Anderson, 2013), and (b) meaningful student engagement in the surrounding community as a part of the learning process (Paisley, Spencer, Wells, & Schwab, 2013).

In this paper, we aimed to explore current practices of integrated experiential education in Recreation and Leisure programs in North America and the benefits and challenges of implementing integrated experiential education for students, instructors, and community agencies from the instructor perspective. As well, we offer a proposed model that defines the breadth of integrated experiential education approaches across continua of: (a) curricular emphasis on single subject or multiple disciplines, (b) the setting where the learning occurs (e.g., classroom and community), (c) role of the instructor (i.e., expert or co-learner), and (d) philosophy of the instructor (i.e., professionalism or social justice)

Literature Review

Traditional university education is often defined by its structure: classes are held in separate time slots, taught by different instructors, often using lecture-based formats. A recent criticism of traditional classroom education asserts that this type of structure "can become like a prison to innovation and a refuge for silos" (Baldwin, Mainieri, & Brookover, 2013, p. 65) where students may have difficulty understanding the relevance of the course content and there is little opportunity to apply it in practical settings (Anderson, 2013). In opposition, the defining feature of integrated curriculum is that it crosses subjects or disciplines in a holistic manner, so that students are engaged in personal and interactive ways (Shoemaker, 1989), with material that is relevant and meaningful and relates to the real world. What this looks like in practice varies, but is often aligned with the ideas and philosophies of experiential education (e.g., Baldwin et al., 2013; Paisley et al., 2013).

The inherent problem of traditional education, as John Dewey (1986) saw it, was epistemological. He saw traditional teaching as an imposition, where students are passive receivers of expert instructor knowledge that is often delivered through lectures. Theoretically, experiential education addresses the issues outlined above. Joplin (1995) outlines experiential education as comprised of five components beginning with focus (where the attention of the students is isolated), then a hurricane-like action phase followed by a reflection phase; all surrounded by feedback and support from the instructor. For the action phase, the instructor must use what she calls "original sources" for experience – in that students must be able to experience something first-hand. Additionally, she implores instructors to cultivate the holistic understandings that go hand-in-hand with personal experience rather than simplistic or summative statements that are often necessary in traditional contexts. While first-hand experience is important, she also cautions that "experience alone is insufficient to be called experiential education" (p. 15). Both action and reflection phases are necessary and need to be facilitated with support and feedback by the instructor. While Joplin's five-stage model (i.e., focus, action, debrief, feedback, support) is intended to help instructors plan experiential education opportunities, it also highlights some key components of what "experiential" means from the perspective of learners: it is a context where they are actively engaged in learning by sorting through information and prioritizing decisions.

While experiential education is used within many classrooms and in community contexts such as internships, and may address some of the challenges outlined in the introductory paragraph, in our experiential practices we do not necessarily challenge the siloed approach. For example, courses are often separated by discipline, and fieldwork is disconnected from the classroom within degree programs'. We contend that 'integrated experiential education' includes the practice of facilitating experiential opportunities for students, but in a coordinated and interdisciplinary way that involves multiple courses, multiple faculty members, and the surrounding community. For example, while experiential educators might ask students to draw on their personal experience or provide a classroom experience upon which to reflect, integrated experiential education reformats the course structure by, for example, offering block courses (i.e., multiple courses and subject areas within a set timeframe) or introducing theories in the classroom that support community work and volunteer experiences on an as need basis to support students in their community-based experiences.

Integrated experiential education is not the sole pedagogical approach to education that has advocated for interdisciplinary learning. For example, backward design (Wiggins & McTighi, 2001) focused on using desired learning outcomes as a basis for planning learning experiences and encourages early consideration of the key or "big ideas" at the heart of a course or learning module. These big ideas are often learned through meaningful, interdisciplinary learning experiences. Similarly, Swap and Wayland (2013) propose an "intellectual apprenticeship" of interdisciplinary, community-focused projects for science and engineering students, intended to encourage students to focus on processes rather than outcomes, and to push both students and other stakeholders to move outside their silos. However, both these approaches use interdisciplinarity as a tool to achieve another goal, such as encouraging students to focus on process rather than outcomes. Integrated experiential education is unique in drawing attention to the integration across courses and disciplines that could, in more traditional learning environments, be taught independently as separate courses. Experiential and, in particular, community-based settings are powerful contexts for integrated experiential education because real-life settings are inherently interdisciplinary.

Because integrated experiential education builds on experiential education, it will be helpful to further define how experiential education is used in the classroom and how it relates to

other terms, such as service learning. Several scholars and educators have previously outlined the difficulty of defining experiential education as a practice and, due to this ambiguity, the myriad and problematic ways in which theory related to experiential education is interpreted and put into use (Breunig, 2014; Moon, 2004; Roberts, 2008). Crosby (1981) outlined that ensuring the active engagement of students is the most controversial issue in experiential education. To further clarify, she suggests that teaching implies a power relationship between student and instructor that is often not interrogated. Attending to these power imbalances is key to engaging students, and demands a shift in how teaching and learning occurs. It is this shift—typically from more top-down approaches that position the teacher as expert to more experiential, action-based approaches where the teacher and students are co-learners—that has sparked controversy. Paulo Freire (2000) criticized what he calls the "banking model of education," or traditional education, where the narrative of the teacher (i.e., the expert) is deposited into the minds of the students (i.e., listening objects). He believed that this model of education perpetuates oppressive relationships. In contrast, if students and educators are to be equally liberated, educators need to actively create a climate where learners do not become passive listeners, but rather partner with their teachers to become critical co-learners in search of answers. Thus, as students and teachers experience challenges, learn and grow together, there is opportunity to create a microcosm for social change. Some educators have highlighted the potential of experiential education to raise awareness of issues of social justice and oppression (Breunig, 2005; Jones, Gilbride-Brown, & Gasiorski, 2005; Warren & Loeffler, 2000; Warren, Roberts, Breunig, Alvarez, & Antonio, 2014).

Further to the ambiguity of active engagement in practice, many recreation and outdoor programs use the term "experiential" to delineate the "hands on" nature of their programs (Roberts, 2008). In some cases, "hands on" means education that takes place in practical settings and in the surrounding university community, such as on campus or with community organizations – but often without the necessary and corresponding reflection that is the very foundation of experiential education. In practice, this can include internships, field placements, student volunteering, and service learning. To help untangle some of these definitions, Furco (1996) provides a continuum in which these terms can be understood relative to one another. At one end of the continuum is the emphasis on learning and the student receiving most of the benefits (i.e., internship) and at the other end of the continuum is the emphasis on helping rather than learning and where the main beneficiary is the community organization (i.e., volunteerism). In the middle, we find academic service learning where both the student and the community benefit: the student through implementing course content in a practical realm, and the community organization has their functional needs met.

However, while Furco's (1996) continuum attests to the different ways in which students engage in the field of practice, it only hints at the role of academic theory, the structure of supporting courses, and the role of the instructor in these contexts. For example, when students are working within the complex realities of community where interdisciplinary knowledge is needed to understand and address real-life problems, the structure of university courses can also be shifted to support this experiential and interdisciplinary form of learning. To further explain, internship and field education are often taken independently of course work, at the end of a degree. However, there are other ways for students to be supported in implementing theoretical knowledge into practice. For example, students can simultaneously learn theory and implement it into practice via integrated curriculum. In practice this includes reimagining course structures through block courses, where two or more courses are amalgamated into one classroom experience; a way of seamlessly connecting multiple subject or discipline areas and where students learn classroom

material that is most relevant to their community experiences (Anderson, 2013). Interdisciplinarity is also encouraged through team teaching or by engaging instructors who can support more than one subject area. Paisley et al. (2013) have articulated that integrated curricula can include community engagement where part of the student's time takes place outside of the classroom and in reciprocal relationships that benefit students as well as community partners (i.e., academic service learning). Therefore, integrated experiential education includes experiential opportunities within academic service learning contexts that are supported through changes in course structure.

While much of the research on the impact of integrating curricula has been concerned with elementary and secondary school (Anderson, 2013), some research with university students indicates that the integrated experiential approach improves student knowledge (Brunei & Hibbard, 2006), develops students' abilities to ask complex questions and brainstorm multiple possibilities (Klein, 2005), allows students to see relationships among concepts and apply these concepts in real life scenarios (Anderson, 2013), cultivates awareness of social issues (Markus et al., 1993), and supports the development of students as agents of social change (Paisley et al., 2013).

In comparison to traditional methods of instruction, students who engage in this type of experiential education have more positive perceptions of instruction, course content, and course structure, work better in teams, and are better able to apply knowledge to practical contexts (Petersen et al., 2005). They are therefore more engaged and, upon graduation, are more competitive on the job market (Baldwin et al., 2013). For instructors, although the first few years are challenging, the integrated context becomes more efficient, and as instructors work together to figure out how to teach across disciplinary contexts, they become better instructors (Anderson, 2013).

Research also outlines that when integrated experiential education is implemented there are several challenges, including costs and time associated with developing new curriculum and retraining faculty on what have perhaps become safe or comfortable ways of teaching in the classroom (e.g., Anderson, 2013; Katz, 2013). This retraining includes helping faculty develop new teaching roles and beliefs, moving away from didactic and traditional techniques (e.g., relying on lecture based formats) and developing their abilities as constructivist facilitators of group experiences as well as co-learners alongside students (Anderson, 2013; Breunig, 2014). This can require extensive professional development for faculty members on how to become great facilitators rather than great lecturers (Loepp, 1999; Petersen et al., 2005). In the face of these changes, it can be difficult to obtain buy-in from faculty and administration who are, for various reasons, fearful of losing content, and married to the traditional structures of postsecondary education (Paisley et al., 2013). Buy-in from faculty is also constrained by the myriad ways that investing in teaching is systemically undervalued by university administration through faculty workloads, tenure and promotion processes, and university awards and accolades that emphasize research dollars and publications (Anderson, 2013; Katz, 2013). Without structural changes in the ways that faculty are rewarded and, therefore, time structured, it can be difficult to imagine change. Other more practical concerns are focused on the assessment methods associated with experiential contexts (Yates, Wilson, & Purton, 2014), such as what to do with students who are failing in a group learning context and how to evaluate this student's failing performance at an individual level (Paisley et al., 2013; Powell, Johnson, James, & Dunlap, 2013), as well as the need for an administrator to coordinate community experiences (Powell, James, & Johnson, 2013).

While there have been some musings about the benefits and challenges associated with offering integrated experiential curricula for university students, much of this work is primarily

anecdotal in nature and based on single programs (e.g., Brunei & Hibbard, 2006), particularly professional programs such as law (Katz, 2013) or engineering (Swap & Wayland, 2013), or theoretical in nature (Loepp, 1999; Shoemaker, 1989). Our goal with this research is to begin to develop a theoretical model of the different types of integrated experiential education offered in Recreation and Leisure programs and to explore nuanced understandings of the benefits and challenges in offering such curriculum. As such, we undertook a research project exploring the definitions, challenges, and benefits of offering integrated experiential curriculum in universities within North American Recreation and Leisure studies programs.

Method

Ethics approval was obtained by the Social Sciences and Humanities research ethics board at Dalhousie University. Ten interviews with faculty members in Recreation and Leisure programs in North America were conducted in December of 2015. Interviewees were recruited through posts soliciting participants that were sent through the Canadian Association for Leisure Studies (CALS) and the Academy of Leisure Sciences (ALS) listservs. In particular, we purposively sought research participants who had been active in designing and implementing integrated experiential curriculum projects at their respective institutions. Participants were asked to describe their initiatives, the theoretical framework that guided their decision making, and the benefits and challenges they faced. Each interview began with a request that the participant describe the integrated experiential learning initiative in which they were involved, and then participants were asked to respond to follow-up questions including: "What worked well with this initiative?" "What challenges did you encounter, and how were these addressed?" and "What process did you use to develop this initiative?" All interviews were conducted by the first author, were approximately an hour long, conducted by phone, audio-recorded, transcribed and uploaded into NVivo, a qualitative data analysis program.

The transcripts were analyzed using directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). First, the researchers sensitized themselves to the literature on integrated experiential education, definitions, and commonly-cited challenges and benefits; they then used this information to establish preliminary coding categories. Data that could not be categorized using these pre-existing codes were given a new code. Finally, the first and second authors analyzed the relationships among the preliminary codes to merge the existing codes into larger themes.

Results and Discussion

Participants represented a variety of types of integrated experiential programs, including multiple courses integrated into single blocks, single courses taught by more than one instructor, field placements or internships that took place at the same time as classes meant to support this experience, and case studies or problem based learning within the classroom. Most programs increased student time spent in community organizations over the course of their degree. Half of our participants were instrumental in leading significant curriculum changes towards increased integrated curricula in their respective faculties.

First, interviewees were asked to describe the benefits and challenges for students and instructors in offering their integrated experiential curricula.

Challenges

Challenges associated with implementing integrated experiential education included relationship building, garnering buy in from faculty and administration to undertake the process, and structural or administrative challenges.

Relationship building. Many interviewees stated that there were not enough organizations to accommodate all student placements; and the situation is made worse when instructors feel that they are competing with other faculties for the same student placement. One solution is to seek out organizations that are further from campus – however, while some students enjoy leaving the region to try something new, it also places a travel burden on the student that they need to figure out themselves.

Conversely, some programs and instructors have developed long-standing relationships with organizations and their programming now relies heavily on student field placements or internships. Without student participation, these organizations would be unable to run some of their programming. In all cases, student placements can become a burden on community organizations if students are unprepared or unable to do a good job.

Instructors outlined that the background or start up work required to develop agency connections that can be relied on term after term is time consuming and often the strongest community ties are the result of a lifetime of work facilitating relationships between students and agencies. One instructor noted: "it requires more public relation skills from your faculty member that's supervising because sometimes you have to smooth out problems or come up with some solutions."

Buy in. Participants emphasized the difficulty of getting students, faculty, and university administration on board and keeping them on board with significant structural changes to curriculum. Administrators mentioned by participants included faculty, chairs, deans, presidents, the registrar, and the staff at the financial aid office. In short, new curriculum delivered through different teaching structures and methods of assessment has to be valued by the university as a whole. In this struggle for buy-in it is evident that there are tensions between the upper administration in institutions of higher education that are calling for teaching and learning to be done in community and the values that are espoused in the tenure and promotion process that emphasizes research, grants, and publications. Additionally, some faculty have long standing teaching practices: "we've got faculty here who have been in this program for 30 years and I'm not going to say they're not open to change but change needs to come slowly for them."

Those who undertook large-scale changes within their faculty towards block courses suggest that it is better to make changes all at once rather than gradually because it is difficult to continually solicit buy-in from faculty and administration in the midst of large-scale changes. As well, during these changes, faculty can further polarize their support; every hurdle can be confirmation of doomed failure. During these times of transition, it is important to stay calm even in the face of uncertainty: "One of the things we learned was do not let anyone smell fear with respect to 'we're still figuring this out, we don't know exactly what we are doing'…we needed to project an air of organizational confidence that might have exceeded where we were structurally."

Buy in can be difficult to cultivate and maintain, especially as many instructors commented on the heavy workload associated with integrated experiential education. Previous publications have outlined that the workload was heavy when first implementing integrated curriculum and after a few years it became more manageable (Powell, James, et al., 2013); however, for others

whose curriculum is less integrated (i.e., a single course format supporting students placed in community), the administrative work load remains high:

> every year I wonder if this is the right decision just because these types of courses are way more labour intensive. For example, in the fourth year course student are bringing the agency issues back into the classroom. I can't plan for that to be quite truthful. So I spend half a course not knowing what the content is actually going to be until I'm halfway through the course. It is way more labour intensive and of course, my research suffers because of it.

While instructors acknowledge that less integrated curriculum is more time consuming for the instructor, they also state that integrated curriculum can also be more time consuming for the student. Students experience frustration with teaching environments that differ from other classes they are taking or that are different from their previous experiences. When experiencing a change in styles of teaching, students find that they must assume more responsibility for their learning and they can resist. They sometimes believe that instructors' standards are too high and become overwhelmed, or they do not fully understand why they are doing some activities. These frustrations are particularly germane during the two- to three-year transition phase from traditional education to more integrated curricula. As well, sometimes students think that they can't be learning if they are enjoying themselves or they do not think they have learned anything before a formal reflection process has been undertaken. Finally, some participants noted that students push back on the social justice issues that are inherent in community work: "I've had students say, 'I don't want to save the world. I want to run a hotel.'"

Structural challenges. Administrative challenges that interfere with implementing the program were also present, regardless of the type of integrated curriculum and are reflected in the current literature (Powell, James, et al., 2013). However, less integrated curriculum, where instructors are working on a single course, require solutions that are developed and implemented without the support of a core unit of faculty. Paramount in all types of integrated programs were the clerical hassles and time consuming nature of placing students in community contexts that work for students as well as the organization. Other challenges included weak community mentors that were unable to provide the students with the experience they needed:

> they sometimes feel like, well what's the point of me doing this degree if the person who's out in practice isn't practicing what they've been taught or comes from a different education background where they haven't necessarily been taught all of these skills?

Finally, instructors struggle with how to fail students who are not contributing to the success of the organization and how to give fair grades in group work when one student is not contributing an equal amount:

> I do have to say that that's an ongoing thing that I wrestle with, is that these are fourth year students doing large group work projects [where their mark is influenced by their classmates]. That is 30% of their mark and that's particularly problematic, especially for those who are trying to get into graduate school or teachers' college.

Benefits

Instructors outlined what they perceived to be the student benefits of integrated experiential education although many noted that they did not formally evaluate their program beyond instructor course evaluations. Many of these perceptions are based on instructors' correspondence with former students, from conversations with current students, or comments on student evaluations.

Students. Student benefits included authenticity, where their learning experiences were situated in complex environments that mirrored their lives and future work environments, as well as career knowledge, where they gain practical insights into career possibilities.

Authenticity. Instructors stated that students enjoyed integrated experiential education because they were able to engage meaningfully in the material by making links among multiple disciplines and curriculum taught and connect the academic to the social; as reflected in the literature (Paisley et al., 2013): "instead of us having these separate classes where students were trying to figure out how these all fit together (if they were even thinking that), we were able to put the thread together to connect them." Students also appreciated being able to build relationships with instructors, agencies, other students, and community members. One participant noted that students learn "that their professors are real people with real lives who care about them and who are also learners." For some students, this departure from more traditional teaching formats results in more opportunities to be mentored, a positive sentiment of increased responsibility for their own learning, better grades, and a change in worldview.

Career knowledge. Students gain professional skills as a result of the integrated curriculum, also reflected in the literature (Anderson, 2013). Their community activities also help them to determine if they are in the right profession:

> I think it's certainly a reality check if they really want to do this. And I'll tell students go out and explore, you think you want to teach PE, then go teach PE and see if you like those toothless wonders, or see how much you like those high school kids that don't want to be there, and …see if that's really the population you want to work with. Additionally, when students spend time in community settings they are able to gain practitioner references: "it's the reputation of beginning."

Instructors. It is clear that instructors invest time cultivating the program structure, relationships with community agencies, developing content, and by supporting students beyond their academic needs. Many interviewees state that they do believe the effort is worthwhile and that there are not only benefits for the students, but for themselves, including a return on the investment of their time and experiencing their own positive personal changes (Petersen et al., 2005).

Return on investment. The majority of interviewees noted that because of the amount of time it takes to build and maintain relationships with other faculty, students, and agencies due to the emergent nature of the curriculum, integrated experiential curriculum is more work to implement. Many instructors noted this struggle between the effort required of them and the knowledge that the experiences are valuable for students: "I receive emails from grad students in other programs and out in the field and they're always saying that that was the most valuable learning experience they had in their entire time here." A few instructors in more integrated programs felt that after the initial efforts of establishing the program, the workload decreased and they saw the student benefits quite clearly and early on.

Personal change. Often faculty progressed through their own undergraduate degrees without experiencing integrated experiential curriculum first-hand and without any practical experience implementing it. As a result, instructors had to learn new ways of doing things. Many instructors noted that it was more than just changing the curriculum that they taught, but that they had to change the way they interacted with students and how they supported them. Some noted their own resistance to this change but that once these challenges were embraced

> we became what we wanted our students to become. And that is, critical problem solvers, and not "no" people, but instead "how-to" people. And that's what we began to do as we encountered challenges with the system, is we'd say no is really not an acceptable answer.

Definitions of Integrated Experiential Education

While integrated curriculum has theoretically been defined as curriculum that cuts across disciplines (Shoemaker, 1989) and that moves beyond the textbook as a primary source of learning (Anderson, 2013), our participants outlined many different types of practices with several components needed for integrated experiential education. We propose that these components span four continua: (a) multi subject material, (b) the setting where the learning occurs (e.g., classroom and community), (c) the relational role of the instructor, and (d) epistemological shifts (e.g., from didactic to constructivist).

Multi subject. The "integrated" aspect of integrated experiential education merges more than one subject or discipline together in a teaching setting. This can happen, for example, when instructors are able to offer more than one subject in a single class, in block style courses throughout the program, or when students are simultaneously in community and the classroom. As an example, previous publications have outlined the use of block scheduling, where students meet Monday to Thursday from 9am to 2pm for a total of 12 credits, rather than traditional structures where students meet three times per week for 50 min to receive three credits (Baldwin, Mainieri, & Brookover, 2013). Because students' practical experiences are likely to be interdisciplinary in nature, one participant noted that integrated curriculum was also: "taking information from multiple sources (e.g., student experience, textbooks) to make better decisions [about the problem]…So kind of de-compartmentalizing and de-siloing, if that's a word." Our participants also described how they build the content of their classroom teaching in immediate response to the experience of students in the field.

Setting. In previous publications, changing the context of learning has meant that students meet in whatever context best facilitates authentic learning (e.g., classroom, computer lab, gymnasium, or other field trips) (Baldwin et al., 2013). However, these participants outlined that integral to integrated experiential education is that students spend at least some of their time in the surrounding community developing relationships with local organizations: "I think we have an obligation to [place students in community]; in many ways it's irresponsible not to do that." Some programs set up a singular community experience that can be drawn upon in multiple classes, while others set up multiple experiences over time so that the student is increasingly integrated into community over the course of their degree program.

Relational role of instructor. From our interviewees, it is clear that integrated experiential education changes relationships among students, instructors, and community. Often, small group work, community placements, and classroom content that is developed based on student experience creates conditions where students build relationships among themselves, with

instructors, and with community partners. For example, students can be working with youth who are experiencing challenges and may need increased support from their instructors, or be facing life challenges themselves (e.g., mental health challenges, death in the family). This relational aspect is evident in the literature through students sharing their own personal experiences with instructors and other students (e.g., Powell, James, et al., 2013). The responsibility of the instructor is to see and hear about the student's personal lives, support them as best they can, and to further develop the communication and care skills to do this, while also acknowledging the power imbalance inherent in the relationship (Powell, James, et al., 2013). It is clear that integrated curriculum engages students and faculty holistically; that is, beyond the academic content (Joplin, 1995).

Our interviewees noted that this increased familiarity between instructor and student implies a responsibility of the instructor to care for students in new ways:

> if there is a problem or there is something they're writing about in their journals or reflecting on in a meeting that you're concerned about, you have to be willing to take the time and really get into that. And when you do, you just automatically open yourselves up to a lot more personal information that's coming from the students as well.

The responsibility of knowing the personal issues of your students can weigh heavily on instructors:

> When you know everything about your students, you know they're dealing with drug issues and depression, to their parents having cancer. Knowing your students carries … an additional responsibility and a different set of skills for helping them manage and think through their personal lives.

In these holistic teaching environments, instructors "manage a community, not just teach a class." Some interviewees also articulated the goal of integrated experiential education as creating a more socially just society. Justice can begin to be negotiated through the student-instructor relationship and in authentic community work environments.

Integrated experiential education also implies a collaborative work environment for instructors: even if instructors simply have an awareness of the community service opportunities in which students engage in their other classes, this awareness requires regular dialogue among instructors.

Epistemological shift. The more holistic the educative experience becomes the more instructors must be open to learning alongside students. For instance, in integrated experiential curriculum, instructors position themselves as less of an expert and more of a facilitator or co-learner (Dewey, 1986). In fact: "you are being open to the students coming back in as the experts." Often, this change means that instructors emphasize the process of learning over trying to make sure that certain content is covered. They become what Freire (2000) terms "co-learners" in the classroom.

Sometimes, this means that instructors are open to the students dictating the content so that they are learning about what they need to know at the time that they need it. This student-driven content can be an uncomfortable process for instructors who may want to map out the course and the semester in more concrete terms. For instructors who altered their teaching methods to integrated experiential education, they noted the need for an epistemological shift: "faculty tend

to think about the use of class time in a particular way, like I have to fill that with a lecture or I can have a small learning activity but primarily it needs to be me talking and me providing information." This shift means moving from didactic to constructivist methods where they use fewer lecture-based content sessions.

A Theoretical Model

It is clear from our interviewees that there are many ways of practicing integrated experiential education. Integrated experiential education inherently relies on experiential methods, but, as some of our participants stated, there is still the pervasive use of "experiential education" to mean "hands on learning" that does not embrace reflection. The simplicity of this understanding has merit in that it is easily communicated, but it lacks the vigour and complexity that Dewey so eloquently articulated (Dewey, 1986). Recent work has also problematized this current use of "experiential" as vague and superficial (Roberts, 2008) as it often lacks acknowledgement of the reflection part of the action-reflection cycle as well as the student-centred focus, where students can impact the direction of the material. Researchers have noted that this ambiguity is often due to a lack of rigorous interrogation of practice and inconsistencies between theories and practices, as well as a lack of acknowledgement of student-instructor power relations (Breunig, 2005; Estes, 2004). With this confusion over definitions of "experiential" in mind, and because of the wide variety of models and practices of integration that our interviewees expressed, we would like to suggest a model that we hope is useful for expanding the conversation on our teaching practices and that captures the reality of what we do.

In both classroom and community contexts, experiential methods can be used. In more traditional education contexts, when the classroom is the context, experiential education might look like role-playing with an accompanying debrief within one 50-minute session. In integrated experiential education, the structure might include block courses, and students may spend time in the classroom reflecting on their community experience and connecting with the appropriate content. As stated above, as curriculum becomes increasingly integrated, more and more of the students' course time is spent in community and the subject matter is inherently more interdisciplinary and becomes more about content and process versus solely about transferring content. For example, instructors must support students to manage conflicts that arise within the community environment, within their own lives, as well as introduce material that best supports the students at the time that they need it. The role of the instructor transitions from that of the expert to a co-learner or facilitator and the relationships among instructors, students, and communities becomes more holistic rather than centred on academic knowledge. There can also be a corresponding shift in philosophy from professionalism, which emphasizes appropriate behaviours of individuals such as turning off cell phones and not talking in class (Fourneir, 1999), to an emphasis on social justice through challenging oppressive systems and where the instructor-student relationship becomes a microcosm for social change. This type of instructor-student relationship is often inevitable in integrated learning contexts, as when students engage in real life scenarios within their communities, they see and experience injustices.

The model we suggest includes continua of place, curriculum, philosophy, instructor role, and content (see Figure 1). While all of these continua were present in the data, they were not necessarily related. That is, a community-based experience that was integrated into block courses did not necessarily mean that the program emphasized social justice. Typically, however, the more integrated the curriculum, the less the role of the instructor is positioned as the 'expert' (i.e., a

focus on the distribution of content) and the more instructors are facilitators (i.e., they help students find the right information at the right time).

	Integrated Contexts		Traditional Contexts
Place	Community	←→	Classroom
Curriculum	Process oriented	←→	Content oriented
Philosophy	Social justice (holistic)	←→	Professionalism (individualistic)
Instructor Role	Facilitator and co learner	←→	Expert
Content	Block courses, interdisciplinary content	←→	Single courses, single subject

Figure 1. The integrated experiential continuum.

In Figure 1, all of the contexts on the continuum can be experiential, and it is the degree to which they are integrated that shifts. That is, instructors who offer lessons that incorporate the lived experience of students, reflective exercises, or collaborative learning processes in the classroom are experiential learning contexts just as are community contexts where students are event planning or running after school programs for children *if* they are guided to reflect on these experiences. What shifts from left to right is the integrated context. While all of these elements (i.e., place, curriculum, philosophy, instructor role, and content) would be considered aspects of integrated experiential education, we are not proposing that, for example, integrated university courses take place solely in community and that students never spend time in the classroom. On the contrary, we see the continua as relative and fluid categories rather than either/or scenarios.

Conclusion

It is clear from our interviews that "experiential" and "integrated" mean many things to many different people. As one interviewee states: "I'm pretty sure that many people…couldn't tell me what experiential learning is in relation to service learning, in relation to active learning, in relation to simply hands-on learning." As such, we believe the continuum we have proposed, defining the breadth of integrated experiential education approaches across continua of place, curriculum, philosophy, instructor role, and content, is relevant, as it provides a tool for both understanding common aspects of integrated experiential approaches and identifying where specific programs lie across these continua. When we consider this model, the less integrated programs, where instructors are working independently on a single course that is supporting students in the community, are the most time consuming and where the benefits are not always immediately apparent to the students. With this in mind, it may be worth considering large-scale changes towards integration more quickly, rather than making smaller changes to the program over time. While the learning curve is steep for such drastic changes, the benefits of increasingly integrated programs are much more apparent to both instructors and students; the momentum may be lost for faculty that slowly transition to integrated programming.

As a word of caution we do need to consider that there are components of teaching that may be beyond instructor control, including class size, or whether there is a teaching assistant assigned to the class. However, each decision that instructors are able to make along these continua of place, curriculum, philosophy, instructor role, and content impacts practice, sometimes in ways that are unexpected. As such, instructors need to model reflective teaching practices and ask themselves: "Given the impact of my choices, what I am prepared to do?" For example, in integrated contexts a student is more likely to come to you with a personal problem. How will you

be able to support them? Most importantly, is engaging the university community or the surrounding community important to your teaching goals and supported by your administration?

While many of our interviewees commented that they see the benefits of their integrated programs, these programs have not been extensively assessed beyond basic student evaluations. Thus, there is much opportunity for future work in this area. Researchers can contribute to community engagement through scholarship and with the introduction of new models that are imperative to better understand our practices in relationship to theory and to advance our scholarship. In conclusion, faculty and administration that support community engagement, community-engaged learning, and community-engaged scholarship in strategic plans, where integrated curriculum is paramount, must support faculty members through workloads, awards and recognitions, and the tenure and promotion process to recognize the work and support needed.

References

Anderson, D. (2013). Overarching goals, values, and assumptions of integrated curriculum design. *SCHOLE: A Journal Of Leisure Studies And Recreation Education, 28*(1), 1 - 10.

Athavale, J., Davis, R., & Myring, M. (2008). The integrated business curriculum: An examination of perceptions and practice. *Journal of Education for Business*, *83*(5), 295-301. http://dx.doi.org/10.3200/JOEB.83.5.295-301

Baldwin, E., Mainieri, T., & Brookover, R. (2013). The EDGE of learning: Clemson University parks, recreation, and tourism management immersion semester. *SCHOLE: A Journal Of Leisure Studies And Recreation Education, 28*(1), 64-77.

Breunig, M. (2005). Turning experiential education and critical pedagogy theory into praxis. *Journal of Experiential Education, 28*(2), 106-122. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/105382590502800205

Breunig, M. (2014). The transformative potential of learning through service while "doing" classroom-based research. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 5*(1), 1-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2014.1.9

Brunei, F. F., & Hibbard, J. D. (2006). Using innovations in student teaming to leverage crossfunctional and marketing learning: Evidence from a fully integrated undergraduate core. *Marketing Education Review, 16*(3), 15-23. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2006.11488968

Crosby, A. (1981). A critical look: The philosophical foundations of experiential education. *Journal of Experiential Education, 4*(1), 9-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/105382598100400103

Dewey, J. (1986). Experience and education. Paper presented at The Educational Forum. *The Educational Forum,* 50(3), 241-252. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131728609335764

Estes, C. A. (2004). Promoting student-centered learning in experiential education. *The Journal of Experiential Education, 27*(2), 141-160. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/105382590402700203

Fournier, V. (1999). The appeal to 'professionalism' as a disciplinary mechanism. The Sociological Review, 47(2), 280-307. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1467-954X.00173

Freire, P. (2000). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. City, State: Bloomsbury Publishing: London.

Furco, A. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In Taylor, B. and Corporation for National Service (Eds.), *Expanding Boundaries: Serving and Learning* (pp. 2-6). Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service.

Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three approaches to qualitative content analysis. *Qualitative Health Research, 15*(9), 1277-1288. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1049732305276687

Jones, S., Gilbride-Brown, J., & Gasiorski, A. (2005). Getting inside the "underside" of service-learning: Student resistance and possibilities. In D.W. Butin, *Service-learning in higher education* (pp. 3-24). New York: Palgrave Macmillan. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9781403981042_1

Joplin, L. (1995). On defining experiential education. In K. Warren, M. Sakofs, & J. Hunt (Eds.), *The theory of experiential education* (pp.15-22). Dubuqu, IA: Kendall/Hunt.

Katz, M. J. (2013). Facilitating better law teaching – now. *Emory Law Journal, 62*(62), 823-850.

Klein, J. T. (2005). Integrative learning interdisciplinary studies. *Peer Review, 7*(4), 8-10.

Loepp, F. L. (1999). Models of curriculum integration. *Journal of Technology Studies, 25*(2), 21-25. http://dx.doi.org/10.21061/jots.v25i2.a.6

Markus, G. B., Howard, J., & King, D. C. (1993). Notes: Integrating community service and classroom instruction enhances learning: Results from an experiment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 15*(4), 410-419. http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/01623737015004410

Moon, J. A. (2004). A handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice. New York: RoutledgeFalmer.

Paisley, K., Spencer, C., Wells, M., & Schwab, K. (2013). The University of Utah's integrated core: A case study from a 'commuter campus'. *SCHOLE: A Journal Of Leisure Studies And Recreation Education, 28*(1), 54-63

Petersen, D. J., Hovinga, M. E., Pass, M., Kohler, C., Oestenstad, R. K., & Katholi, C. (2005). Assuring public health professionals are prepared for the future: The UAB public health integrated core curriculum. *Public Health Reports (1974-)*, 120(5), 496-503.

Powell, G., James, J., & Johnson, C. (2013). With their permission: Skeptics, resisters, and supporters. *SCHOLE: A Journal Of Leisure Studies And Recreation Education, 28*(1), 113-121.

Powell, G., Johnson, C., James, J., & Dunlap, R. (2013). Four courses within a discipline: UGA unified core. *SCHOLE: A Journal Of Leisure Studies And Recreation Education, 28*(1), 44-53.

Roberts, J. (2008). From experience to neo-experiential education: Variations on a theme. *Journal of Experiential Education, 31*(1), 19-35. http://dx.doi.org/10.5193/JEE.31.1.19

Shoemaker, B. J. E. (1989). Integrative education: A curriculum for the twenty-first century. *OSSC Bulletin, 33*(2), n2.

Swap, R. J., & Wayland, K. (2013). Working across disciplines and chipping away at silos with SLCE: An interdisciplinary approach to educating science and engineering students. *International Journal for Service Learning in Engineering*, Special Edition, 120-136.

Warren, K., & Loeffler, T. A. (2000). Setting a place at the table: Social justice research in outdoor experiential education. *Journal of Experiential Education, 23*(2), 85-90.

Warren, K., Roberts, N. S., Breunig, M., Alvarez, M., & Antonio, G. (2014). Social justice in outdoor experiential education: A state of knowledge review. *Journal of Experiential Education, 37*(1), 89-103. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/105382590002300206

Wiggins, G., & McTighi, J. (2001). What is backward design? In *Understanding by Design* (pp. 7-19) (1st Ed.). Upper Saddle River, NS: Merrill Prentice Hall.

Yates, T., Wilson, J., & Purton, K. (2015). Surveying assessment in experiential learning: A single campus study. *The Canadian Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, 6*(3), Art. 4. Accessed online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.5206/cjsotl-rcacea.2015.3.4