The Battle Between Real-World Experience and Academic Learning Outcomes

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Session Overview

1. Key Insights from the research
2. Facilitating the Experiential Learning Actor Network
3. Practical Tips for aligning real-world experience with learning outcomes
The Research Objective

• Traditional cooperative education (co-op) placements or internships can be very beneficial in orientating and preparing graduates for the workplace (Ambrose & Poklop, 2015)

• However, they are impractical for adult, non-traditional students who are already working full- or part-time while they are in school

• These important and often formative experiences are thus out of reach for these students, effectively creating a two-tier system where non-traditional and adult students, many of whom are from low-income or underrepresented minority (URM) populations, are left behind.
What we’ve learned so far

• Faculty, students and industry sponsors all bring different expectations, intentions and objectives to the collaboration

• For an effective collaboration that achieves objectives each actor (faculty, students and industry sponsors) needs to:
  • Understand each others’ expectations and objectives
  • Learn their ‘new role’ in the learning process
  • Be in a constant state of re-aligning expectations from start to finish
What we learned so far

• There are multiple variables within an internship model that:
  • Need to be decided on,
  • Need to be effectively communicated
  • Have trade offs in terms of time, quality and scale
Current Hypothesis

Alignment of expectations, motivation and outcomes can be intentionally facilitated using a socio-technical system
The Experiential Learning Actor Network
Actor Network Theory

Everything in the natural and social world exists in a constantly shifting network of relationships. Each actor (whether human or technical) is an equal actor in the system.
Standby for the NERDY explanation
A hypothetical experiential learning actor network theory

- STARTING MOTIVATION = (Actor1 Perceived input – Actor1 Perceived Output) + (Actor2 Perceived input – Actor2 Perceived Output)

- Each actor inputs starting motivation (fuel) into the network

- Actor Motivation is positively or negatively impacted by the actions of other actors

- Motivation (fuel) adds or subtracts momentum from the network

- Non-rational actors can REACT or RESPOND to interaction (friction points) with other actors
  - Reacting to momentum = neutral or negative impact on momentum
  - Responding to momentum = positive impact on momentum (acceleration)

- Rational actors can only REACT to an interaction as it is designed to REACT but this reaction still has an impact on the momentum

- The greater the momentum in the network the greater potential for intended outcomes for each actor.

- The greater the alignment of intended outcomes of the actors the lower potential there is for friction points to negatively impact the momentum of the network.
Now let’s make this PRACTICAL
Phases of an Experiential Learning Experience

- Phase One: Before You Start
- Phase Two: As You Start
- Phase Three: The Middle
- Phase Four: Completing
- Phase Five: Post-Completion
Different Student/Industry Sponsors ACT in different ways at each phase
Faculty/Coordinator enabled by technology can know what is going on and respond to the situation to increase positive momentum into the network.
Aligning real-world experience with learning outcomes
Tips for aligning expectations, motivations & outcomes throughout an experiential learning program
1. Design ‘suggested’ industry sponsor projects that align with course learning outcomes

- **Engagement Analysis**
  Evaluate your organization’s social media strategy

- **Technology Evaluation**
  Evaluate & conduct competitor analysis of a technology product

- **Social Media Coordinator**
  Plan & execute a social media plan for the summer

- **Graphic Design Assistant**
  Evaluate and recommend tools to improve visual appeal of marketing materials

- **Technology Quality Assurance**
  Test & report back on user experience of new technology product features.

- **Digital Activities Instructors**
  Provide community and interaction for kids

- **Digital Tutor**
  Help High School, Middle-School & Elementary School Kids catch up on learning they missed

- **Impact Assessment**
  Do an impact assessment of a business initiative (Social Media Analysis, Key Word Searches) and write up a report on the impact of the initiative

- **Data Cleaning/Analysis**
  Data Cleaning and Basics Analysis to assist with business decisions and reporting

- **Public Health Policy**
  Evaluate an existing public health policy and make recommendation of changes in a post COVID context.

- **Public Health Campaign**
  Repurpose an existing Public Health Campaign for a GEN-Z audience

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**Business and Non-Profits**

- **Public Health**
  - **Data Cleaning/Analysis**
  - **Public Health Policy**
  - **Public Health Campaign**

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**Public Health**

- **Technology Quality Assurance**
  - **Digital Activities Instructors**
  - **Digital Tutor**
  - **Impact Assessment**
  - **Data Cleaning/Analysis**
  - **Public Health Policy**
  - **Public Health Campaign**
2. Set a clear project structure with deadlines so that everyone knows what is expected of them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week #</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Events</th>
<th>Deliverables</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>Welcome to your Virtual Internship</td>
<td>Students invited to enroll, complete platform orientation, Remote working activities</td>
<td>Self-Assessment # 1 + Skill Development Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Project Plan</td>
<td>Project Kick-Off Meeting with Supervisor Develop a detailed plan, approach for completing the Project.</td>
<td>Project Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Project Execution</td>
<td>Project Execution</td>
<td>Status Update # 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Project Execution</td>
<td>Project Execution</td>
<td>Self - Assessment # 2 Skill Development Plan Revision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Project Report</td>
<td>Create Project Report and put final touches on Project</td>
<td>Status Update # 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Project Presentation</td>
<td>Create a presentation that presents your project to your supervisor</td>
<td>Project Presentation + Project Report Self-Assessment # 3 + Reflection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Use real-time learning analytics to monitor collaboration
4. Monitor the student – Supervisor Feedback Loops

1. Intern submits work for review
2. Supervisor provides feedback
3. Intern Reflects on feedback and develops their skill
Want to join the research collaboration and test it out?

For more in-depth explanation

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