

*Authentic Learning in Dynamic Globalization Context:
Experiential Learning through Students Business Projects*

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Abstract

This study aims to explore the experiential learning of students in a business management class at bachelor degree level, for better coping and understanding of students in real business world within the dynamic globalization context of their generation. The qualitative method of study was used for data collecting and analysis: participant observation and in-depth interview. It is found in this study that students could continue to study and develop their business ideas after being challenged to design and implement their own business projects in class. The experiential learning is thus a good initiative to life long learning of students in business management field. Students have become more perceptive and adaptive to the dynamic of globalization.

Keywords: authentic, learning, experiential, projected-based, globalization, business management, classroom

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Introduction

As teachers in the age of digital communication and globalization, the task of navigating students' learning through this dynamic world of information and diversities has been truly challenging. To prepare students to be able to cope with the real world situation after graduation, especially in business management field, it is thus practical to adopt the method of experiential learning through project-based class assignments. The idea of authentic learning, especially as the learning design in real life context, has been inspiring.

In this study, key elements of experiential/authentic learning would be explored for the betterment of understanding and practice within the limited context of formal education classroom at the higher education of bachelor degree level.

Objective

This study aims to explore the experiential learning of students in a business management class at bachelor degree level, for better coping and understanding of students in real business world within the dynamic globalization context of their generation.

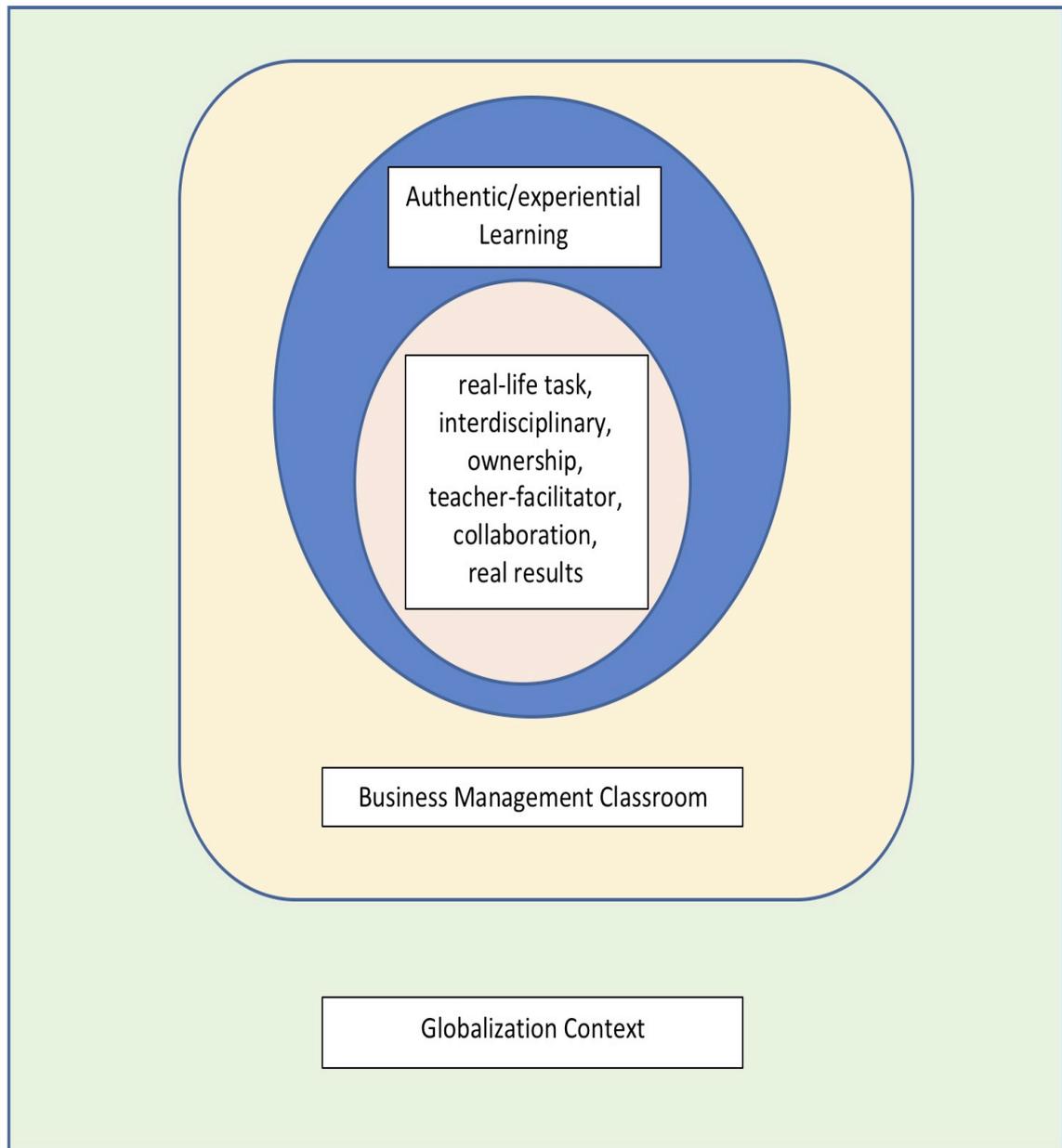
Methodology

The qualitative method of study was used for data collecting and analysis: participant observation and in-depth interview. The key informants were chosen by purposive sampling method.

Conceptual Basis

To design the learning of a business management classroom, it is important to be aware of nowadays dynamic globalization context. Students need to be prepared for a challenging, globalized world with its rapidly ever-changing information. The business management classroom should thus be able to prepare students to own their own learning. This could be done through authentic/experiential learning, that is, through real-life task with real results, with students' ownership to interdisciplinary, collaborative projects, with teachers acting as facilitators.

The conceptual basis of this study could be shown as in the following diagram:



Literature Review

Authentic/Experiential Learning:

Key elements of Authentic/experiential Learning are as following:

1. Real-life task

Students learn through simulated-based project in order to be able to experience/confront with real problems in real context. This could provide seamless

transition for students from school to future professional work after graduation. (Newmann et al., 1996)

2. Interdisciplinary

Students in this dynamic context of diversified information need to learn through projects which would encourage them to use interdisciplinary knowledge to implement: business planning, marketing, communication, language skill, design skill, mathematics. This would prepare students to be more ready for the real world of complexity in their profession after graduation.

3. Ownership

Students are given control/ownership of the project from start to finish. This would encourage them to own their own learning experience, which would be crucial in nowadays world of dynamic change. Students would be able to continue their life-long learning process after graduation. (Peterson, 2016)

This could be done through inquiry-based learning. Students start by posing questions to develop solution. (Blumenfeld et al., 1991)

4. Teacher-facilitator

Teacher should provides support to students' learning as facilitator, not lecturers. Students generally learn better through their own experience than listening to experiences lectured by others. Students are interested in learning more with students-centered activities.

5. Collaboration

To prepare students for real life work environment, students should be encouraged to work in group with others.

6. Real result

Students should be working on solving the problems of the real world, to get the real results towards real people. Students would then be more aware of real life context which could be crucial to their professional work in the future.

Results

In a business class on SME (Small and Medium-sized enterprise) Management for bachelor degree level students, students designed and implement their own SME projects: business analysis and planning, cost analysis, product making and package designing, as well as marketing and selling.

In globalized context, SMEs (Small and Medium-sized enterprises) have been greatly affected (Mwika et al., 2018). It was thus crucial to prepare students in this class to understand the situation through authentic/experiential learning of real-life tasks and real result.

Case Study 1: The Thai traditional crispy fried flower-shaped, rice-floured chip of "Kanom Dok Jok" project

This group of students explored the Thai traditional snack of 'Kanom Dok Jok', or fried flower-shaped, rice-floured chips. After finishing the cooking and packaging design process, they also explored the selling and marketing of the product.

They had found through this experiential process that when a product was at the right time in the right place, it could be in high demand with good value.

They learned this through real-life task while selling this snack product at an office to hungry employees who needed fast, filling, healthy snack. The products were sold well with daily orders. One of the student in the group had decided to continue selling this snack product after finishing the project for class, due to the continuing demand of the product.



One of the reasons why the product was sold well was that it was a traditional snack quite rare to find nowadays. The nostalgic feeling for long lost tradition, as well as the rarity of the products, had attracted city customers who generally could find only fast food, ready-made snacks sold in convenient stores.

"...It is a Thai traditional snack quite difficult to make. It is rare to find for customers, especially in a city like Bangkok. That is the reason why it has been sold well. This snack is rare to find in the city..." (S. Gornboonsai, personal communication, September 24, 2019).

The fact that it was homemade had also made it more appealing to customers in the present days who were health-concerned. The homemade snacks was a great advantage since the snacks could be tailored-made according to the preference of taste of the customers.

"...Our homemade snack products use healthy, natural ingredients, which is better for health comparing to ready-made snack in convenient stores. The customers can also order less or more sweet taste, with less or more sesame which they could not do with ready-made, fast food snacks. We could produce according to customers' orders and preference..." (S. Gornboonsai, personal communication, September 24, 2019).

Case study 2: The Thai steamed rice roll of "Kao Kriab Pak Maw" project

This group of students explored the Thai traditional recipe of 'Kao Kriab Pak Maw', or steamed rice roll.

Kao Kriab Pak Maw is a combination of meat, vegetables, spices covered with thin steamed rice flour wrap. The wrap is a paper-thin steamed rice flour pancake, much like delicate sheets of fresh rice noodles. These pancakes are immediately rolled with other ingredients while it is still hot.

Students had quickly identified that the products were sold well among elderly people who knew this traditional snack well. They chose the right market where elderly people often went in order to sell the products.

"...It is sold well among elderly people. Teenagers mostly don't buy this kind of traditional snack..." (T. Woradit, September 20, 2019).

They also learned to listen to customers' comments on taste and ingredients and adjusted accordingly to improve the product. They had learnt the importance of market analysis and demand of customers.

"...We had to adjust the taste of the fillings. We received the feedback from customers that we put in too much prickled Chinese radish..." (T. Woradit, September 20, 2019).



Discussions and Conclusion

Lesson-learnt of students from these experiential learning from students projects were immeasurable to them in various aspects:

1. Students learned from confronting with the real customers how importance market analysis was in business: choosing the right products for the right market is essential to success in both projects.
2. Students learned from real-task experience the importance of business planning: business concept, cost analysis, SWOT analysis, packaging design, and quality of products.
3. Students learned the real-life business lesson: listening and adapting to customers' need is the key to business success.
4. Students learned the real world context, which could not be taught through lecturing by teachers in the classroom: the real world customers, demand and supply, and competitive products in the market.
5. With teacher acting basically as facilitator in class, students took ownership of their own projects and learning. They collaborated in group to initiate their own ideas, working the interdisciplinary real-life tasks, and tried solving the real problems to get the real results. These key elements of authentic/experiential learning design had greatly supported students to take responsible for their own learning, which would be a strong foundation for their continuing, life-long learning, the essential kind of learning to cope with the dynamic, diversified, and changing world of globalization.

It is found in this study that, in order to provide students with true understanding of globalization context of SMEs, it is very efficient and practical to provide the experiential learning space, through authentic learning concepts of project-based learning. Students could continue to study and develop their business ideas after being challenged to design and implement their own business projects in class. The

experiential learning is thus a good initiative to life long learning of students in business management field. Students have become more perceptive and adaptive to the dynamic of globalization.

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