

Experiential Learning to Enhance Work Skills, Empathy and Entrepreneurship in Business Schools

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ABSTRACT

The characteristics of the Y generation students in business schools necessitates the implementation of teaching strategies that engage and foster experiential learning. This article describes a four day long experiential learning project that was employed among students pursuing their regular management programme in PSG Institute of Management, one of the leading B Schools in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu. The primary purpose of the activity was to create social consciousness among students and to raise their level of understanding the world of the everyday worker. The paper presents case studies that capture the experience students had and their response to this innovative teaching / learning endeavor. The results revealed that 88 percent of the students had positive attitudes towards the experiential learning project and that they developed work skills, empathy for workers and knowledge of entrepreneurial processes.

Introduction

Most of the students pursuing their higher education degrees in Business schools today are Millennials or Generation Y – people born between 1979 and 1994. Their values, lifestyle and learning needs are totally different than those of the previous Generation X (1965–1978) and Baby Boomers (1946–1964) (Hewlett et al., 2009; Shaw & Fairhurst, 2008). Some of the characteristics of Millennials as described by Howe and Strauss (2009) are that they: are individuals who are interested in group activities; identify with parents' values and feel close to their parents; believe it's cool to be smart; are fascinated by new technologies; are racially and ethnically diverse; are focused on grades and

performance; and are involved with extracurricular activities. Additionally Gen Y learners prefer to learn through experiential learning rather than being told by others (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). These characteristics and preferences require the adoption of teaching strategies, pedagogy, learning activities and the creation of learning environments that foster student engagement, interaction and participation in higher education and business management classrooms (Shih & Allen, 2007). Alongside this, the paradigm shifts in business by way of globalization. Innovation and internet revolution have brought about multidimensional opportunities and challenges, which creates a need for business schools to reinvent management education in such a way that it harnesses both the hard and soft skills of

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the prospective managers so that they are well equipped to meet challenges in this globally competitive environment. Hence faculty in business schools need to rethink, innovate and redesign management education pedagogy in the light of the new generation that has moved on campus.

Experiential Learning and its Relevance in Management Education

The learning experience of an MBA graduate is enriched through lectures, power point presentations case studies, readings, assignments, activities, presentations and industrial visits, irrespective of the subject. These traditional methods of teaching which were very well appreciated by the previous generation are no longer effective among Generation Y students (Hewlett et al., 2009). Learning by experience has become the mainstay of primary education across the world, but somehow this teaching form has become a forgotten art in teaching in higher education in management schools. However, the concept of experiential learning is gaining significant importance in the field of management education with the dynamic shift in the teaching learning pedagogy employed in management studies and organization behaviour in many settings (Bevan & Kipka, 2012; Gabula, 2012).

Experiential learning is a process in which learning transactions occur between the individual and the environment. The theory of experiential learning was formulated from insights drawn from the perspectives of prominent scholars of the Twentieth Century who gave experience a central role in their theory of human learning and development. Among the most notable of these scholars were John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, William James, Carl Jung, Carl Rogers, Honey and Mumford (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Kolb,

2005a, b). Experiential learning is often misunderstood as a set of tools and techniques to provide learners with experiences from which they can learn. Rather than being a simplistic process, experiential learning is a philosophy of education based on what Dewey (1938) called a "theory of experience." He argued that while traditional education had little need for theory since practice was determined by tradition, the new experiential approach to education needed a sound theory of experience to guide its conduct. Kolb (1984) states that, "learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience" (p. 38). More often learning occurs when individuals have an interactional experience with the environment. Dewey (1938, p. 44) noted: as an individual passes from one situation to another, his world and his environment, expands and contracts. He or she does not find himself or herself living in another world, but in a different part or aspect of one and the same world. What he or she has learned as knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of understanding and dealing effectively with the situations which follow. Learning in fact becomes still more effective when the individual is involved in activities of increasing complexity. In Piaget's terms, learning occurs through equilibration of the dialectic processes of assimilating new experiences into existing concepts and accommodating existing concepts to new experience.

Experiential learning theory (ELT) has received widespread attention in the management development literature much of which is attributed to Kolb's (1999a, 1999b) learning style inventory. While in the late seventies Honey and Mumford (1982, 1992) worked on a project in the chloride organization to establish the learning style preference and personal development plans

among individual managers after nearly four years of experimentation and assessment they developed the learning styles questionnaire and suggested four basic learning style preferences – activist (having an experience), reflector (reviewing the experience), theorist (concluding from the experience), and pragmatist (planning ahead or putting theory into practice). Honey and Mumford's LSQ has been widely used in management training and development (Sadler-Smith, 1996).

The pedagogy that employs experiential teaching and learning should help students meet the challenges in real time scenario and help harness their soft and hard skills and bring about cognitive, affective and behavioral changes in students. The fact is every student pursuing his or her management education aspires to become a competent individual may be an employee, manager, or an entrepreneur in this global village. Undoubtedly they are more than willing to exert efforts and explore opportunities that will help them learn, grow, and develop in this fast growing competitive environment (George & Gayathridevi, 2013). Management teachers should therefore engage in a quest towards redefining management education for improving the teaching and learning experience of their students and have started employing experiential learning as a component in the pedagogy.

An attempt in this direction was made by PSG Institute of Management, in India to employ an experiential learning project among MBA students with an intention to enrich the teaching learning process among students and to study its implications. PSG Institute of Management is a fifty year old institution and a jewel in the crown of PSG Institutions which is one of the oldest charitable trusts created in India in the year 1926. This experiential learning project was

employed as a component in the organisation behaviour module among the I year students who were pursuing their MBA offered by PSG Institute of Management, Coimbatore, India.

Experiential Learning Activity Introduced in PSG Institute of Management

The study seeks to describe *Anubhav*, an experiential learning project the first-year management students of PSG Institute of Management (PSGIM) were exposed to through an experiential learning programme as part of the Organizational Behaviour paper. The term 'Anubhav' universally in all Indian languages means 'experience'. A study of a similar nature was carried out in the previous year (Anubhav, 2012) where the students had to work as an employee or entrepreneur for a period of two days (George & Gayathridevi, 2013). Anubhav-2013 was a four day long experiential learning project. The objective of this activity was to help students experience reality and equip them with life skills, understand employer and employee attitude, instill confidence, responsibility, planfulness, perseverance, and courage. Anubhav-2014 was a five day long experiential learning activity. In a nutshell the activity is, students had to find a job on their own and work as employees on the first two days (7th & 8th October, 2014) without revealing their identity as PSGIM students or their personal background. They were not supposed to use any personal influence to get a job. Further with the money they earned as wages, they were asked to initiate a business of their choice on the third, fourth and fifth day (9th-11th October, 2014). Finally the students were asked to share 10% of the profit they make towards charity. To meet their personal expenses the students were given a daily allowance of Rs. 26/-. This experiential learning project was employed among the I year PGDM students as a

component in their Management concept and organizational behaviour (MCOB) course module with the intention to help students experience reality, and to raise their level of social consciousness and understanding of the world of an ordinary worker.

Research reveals great managers or leaders are people with humility and strong professional will (Collins, 2001). Hence, if prospective managers or management graduates have to be effective they must learn to appreciate the skill set of individual professions however small or big as they provide a great value addition and benefit to society at large. The objectives of Anubhav were to:

- Mould prospective managers with humility (with positive attitude and empathy for their co-workers irrespective of their level of job).
- Bring about psychosocial maturity in students (to instil in students confidence, responsibility, perseverance, planfulness, individuality and cooperativeness).
- Understand if the involvement, perseverance, and enthusiasm among students persisted in spite of the project being extended to four days.
- Enrich the teaching learning experience and understand the impact experiential learning has over the students.

Students had to satisfy two criteria. The first criterion was they had to work as an employee for the first two days. They could either develop their own work, such as beginning a car wash or providing some other type of service to people, or they could seek out employment for a few days at some type of establishment. They were given an allowance of Rs. 26/day to cater to their

personal expenses and were asked not to reveal their identity or qualifications to customers or employees. The second criterion was they had to start a venture for the next 3 days with the money they earned as an employee in the first two days. They were also allowed to borrow money at the rate of 12% interest if they felt the money they had earned was insufficient to initiate the venture. Lastly they had to contribute 10% of their earnings towards charity and bring about change in somebody's life.

Forty-nine students (16 girls and 33 boys) found employment ranging from working in a gym, laundry, construction site, workshop (mechanics), grocery shop (sorting and packing), hotel, and some of them worked as housekeeping staff and even made artificial jewelry in a store. The students earned between Rs. 100 and Rs. 350 a day as their daily wages. All this they had to do without revealing their true identity. Their earnings went into setting up roadside eateries; fruits stall: juice shops; set up mehendi, artificial jewelry, and tattoo counters on the pavements; and sold flowers by the signals. A team of three students also took up the task of marketing packaged grocery among the households in Coimbatore.

The students were asked to report on their experience using a journal. The cases below are typical of the experiences and are presented to enlighten the reader regarding the processes and the outcomes in terms of student's experience. Each case describes their experience as employee and entrepreneurs.

Case 1

Working as employees. Anubhav was a unique practical learning experience which was assigned to us for four days; for the first two days we had

to work as employees and for the next three days as entrepreneurs. Honestly, in the beginning when we were told about the project we were not interested and later became a part of it.

We formed a group of three and decided that a car wash was going to do the trick, so we went to the residential area behind fun mall (Coimbatore). So we went and asked people if we could wash their cars; some flatly refused and a lot of them had or were going to leave for work so they all needed their cars. That plan was out of question and so we decided to do gardening in a nearby apartment which the security refused. He said “Adhukalam all irukanga ma..ponga..!” (It’s Tamil and it means “there are people to do such jobs please leave”).

From there, we were just wandering around and asking every shop if they had some work for us. Finally we reached a small grocery store. At first, they were a little hesitant and then they gave us a job of packing grocery items into packets of 1kg, 1/2kg, etc. We had a hard time sitting in the same place for hours together sticking grocery packets. The packet sticking machine was under repair so we had to stick the packets using a single candle. We had to arrange the dusty shelves, attend to customers sometimes, and it was a great experience. We earned Rs.250 per day. Though it was not a lot, we were proud of ourselves. We understood the value of money and how hard it is to get a job without any qualifications.

Entrepreneurship. As an entrepreneur, our plan was to outsource grocery items from the company called Nala’s which is located in Erode and sell it to the retailers and the customers. Since our investment was only 600 rupees, we wanted to use our money sensibly and did not want to incur loss. So we planned to carry out a

survey among the prospective customers to understand if they were interested in buying items like ragi flour, sooji, maida, muruku mix, etc., and we predicted the demand accordingly.

We started our survey by 9:00 a.m. and visited nearly 50 individual houses and asked people if they would be interested in buying our products and if they did, which they would prefer. While conducting the survey, we met different kinds of people. Many people were really polite and answered our questions, and some of them even explained why they wouldn’t buy certain items. But as usual, few people told they were busy and were not interested in answering to our questions.

Many of them preferred ragi flour, which shows that people are health conscious these days. We also found that people living in individual houses respond to our questions and treated us better than those living in an apartment. We finished our survey by 3:00 p.m. and placed the order for 10 packets (500 gms) of ragi flour, rice flour, sooji, maida and 6 packets of muruku mix.

The next day we went to the retailer shop where we worked and sold to them 6 packets of ragi flour, 5 packets of rice flour, sooji, maida, and 3 packets of muruku mix. There we earned 540 rupees. Then we visited the households among whom we conducted the survey and sold the remaining packets and earned 607 rupees. Our total sales were 1147 rupees. We learned how to approach people, make use of the resources, and how to make a plan and implement it. We had a wonderful opportunity to experience life outside the four walls of PSGIM.

Case 2

Working as employees. On the first two days of Anubhav, we had to work as employees. We

were given only Rs. 26 each as allowances for our expenses, each day. The first day was very challenging because we had to roam on the streets looking for daily wage jobs. We walked for many hours hoping to get a job. We were asked not to reveal our identity which further increased the difficulty of getting a job. Some shopkeepers didn't want daily-wage employees in their shops. Luckily some of us were able to get jobs by 10 a.m. The not so lucky ones got a job as late as 1:00 p.m. Ranjith got a job of arranging weights in the gym floor at Hopes. Karthigeyan was employed with Hindustan Shoes in RS Puram to set up, display, and sell footwear. On the second day, Ranjith and Karthigeyan got the job of setting up backdrop and stage for an event at VLB College, KovaiPudur. Vijay and Rahul were employed to promote AirTel Money outside Fun Republic Mall at Hopes for the two days. Sarvesh was employed as a delivery person at Purple ironing and laundry in Trichy Road. Meanwhile, Santhosh got employed with Mr. Clean Car Wash to wash cars. We were able to earn at least Rs. 100 per day and some employers were kind enough to offer lunch also. However, most of us had skipped lunch because we had not earned our salaries till evening. All in all, it was a test of skill and endurance for many of us. The whole team earned Rs. 3085 in the two days. During these two days we were able to understand the dignity of labour. No job is small. No job is big. It is our commitment that makes us to excel. Also, we learned to treat everybody with respect.

Entrepreneurship, sale of beverages (coffee, tea) and biriyani. For our entrepreneurship venture, we decided to sell beverages and biryanis. We split into two groups. One team procured items for beverage sales whereas the other team procured the biryanis for sale. We

purchased milk, tea bags, coffee powder, paper cups and sugar. We hired an urn from a nearby canteen to preserve milk. We sold coffee, tea and milk to people in garage shops, road sides, and the Government Road Transport Office in Peelamedu. We finished beverage sales before lunch and proceeded to sell biryanis for lunch. We outsourced chicken biryanis from a Biriyani Shop for Rs. 60 per pack. We sold these biryanis for Rs. 75 per pack. Our total investment for these ventures was Rs. 1470. Our total sale was Rs.1854. We were able to make a profit of Rs. 384 and our ROI was a little over 27%. After this, some of us (Karthigeyan and Sarvesh) ventured into entrepreneurship with other teams also. The entrepreneurship taught us the importance of planning and cooperating. Team management was practically learned by all of us. We were able to understand various consumer behaviour traits and attitudes. We also learned to persevere more to be profitable always! To conclude, the whole experience of Anubhav was enlightening. We thank all those kind-hearted people who employed us. We also thank our institution for encouraging such efforts.

Case 3

Our Organization Behaviour faculty assigned us an experiential learning project for five days. For the first two days of Anubhav we had to work as an employee and with the money we earned as wages we had to initiate a venture for three days as entrepreneurs. We were given only Rs. 26 each for our expenses, each day. Among these two days, the first day was very hectic since we had to roam the street looking for job opportunities under the sun. We were walking nearly for more than two hours. We were asked not to reveal our identity which further increased the difficulty of getting a job. Some shopkeepers didn't want female employees in their shops. Then as a group

of seven, we went to an apartment, thinking of washing cars over there and earning money. We had to ask permission from the owner of the apartment for that purpose. Meanwhile a woman came forward to help us and offered us a job of cleaning a renovated 3-floored mansion which was dusty after painting. She said that she will decide the payment after seeing the quality of our work. So we all set out to start our work. We took the bus with the Rs. 26 we had and reached Hopes. We started cleaning with full enthusiasm and expended all our efforts to clean it better than what we would have done if it were our own house. The cleaning part was a mixture of fun and a good exercise for all of us. All were exhausted by evening. The owner came in the evening to check what we had done. Our enthusiasm did not last long. He said that he was not satisfied with our work and the place was not perfectly clean. All of us were horrified by what the owner said because we had never cleaned a house before so beautifully and perfectly. Then we all left the place demotivated. The next day, we gathered courage, motivated each other and started to work as usual. We lost our interest which we had on the first day. Anyway we cleaned the mansion fully. We were satisfied by the work we did. They offered us Rs.5000 for both the days which included food expenses of nearly Rs.1000.

We learned what 'dignity of labour' is all about. We learned that we shouldn't disrespect any human being, doing any kind of work. All human beings have their own dignity and all are equal in the eyes of God. We learned what motivates workers during their job and what de-motivates them. We learned how an employer treats employees. Some people are bossy and some are sweet. The owner we met was a little bossy and it looked as if, if he were sweet to us, he should have paid a huge sum of money to us. So he didn't reveal his sweetness or appreciation to us.

On the first day of Entrepreneurship, we were all tired because of the heavy housekeeping work we did the previous day. So on the third day we all started out late (by 9:00 a.m.). We had the idea of putting up a stall where we could apply Mehendi, Tattoo and Nail Art for people who wanted to use our service. But the main difficulty we faced was setting up the stall. We were new to this kind of work, so we thought we should get permission from the police. We all went to the police station to get permission for putting up a stall near Gandhipuram (a busy place and heart of Coimbatore). We wrote a letter and gave it there. The Sub-Inspector was not in his office. So we were asked to wait until he turned up; it took a long time. We waited and waited for nearly two hours but could not successfully meet him. So, we decided to leave the place and ask permission from some big shops to give us permission to put up a stall outside their shop for three days. We were all a bit tensed because many other teams started selling things and had started uploading pictures in what's app. Then some of us went to purchase the resources we needed. After we bought all the necessary things, we asked a popular textile shop for permission to put up our stall in front of their showroom. They bluntly refused. Then we asked another shopkeeper for permission. This time we were lucky in that they gave us some space to put up our stall. After that we started writing out on chart paper the cost of the services we are offering. Since it was a Friday, there were not many sales. It was a dull day for our business. By evening we left the place and the next day (final day of Anubhav), we decided to make Gulab Jamuns by ourselves and sell it. So we went to our friend's house and made Gulab Jamuns with our own resources (purchased the previous day and night). It was a success. We sold each Gulab Jamun for Rs. 5 and earned nearly

Rs. 380 from it. The day being a Saturday, our entire business was going on well and we all did our part well. After applying a Tattoo or a Mehendi design, we could see happiness on the faces of both the customer and the person who applied it. They were satisfied with the job they were doing.

Case 4

Anubhav 2013 is an experiential learning project we had to do as a part of our Organizational Behaviour course. We had to satisfy two criteria for completing the project. The first criterion was we had to work as an employee for two days with Rs. 26/- in our hand and we were not supposed to reveal our identity. The second criterion was we had to start a venture for the next three days with the money we earned as an employee in the first two days. We were also allowed to borrow money at the rate of 12% interest. Lastly we had to contribute 10% of our earnings towards charity.

Working as employees. We started our project as employees on 9 October 2013 by 8 a.m. Our starting point was Peelamedu, where we stepped into several shops to work as an employee. After a period of time we were able to settle in different jobs as mechanics, restaurant servers, etc., as an individual and also as a group of a maximum two members. Lucky for us the workshops and restaurants we approached lacked workers so the owners didn't ask our identity. The owners were ready to offer us a job. They were willing to pay Rs. 100 to Rs. 150 per day. We worked from 9:30 a.m. (morning) to 6:00 p.m. (evening) for two days. While working as a server in the hotel and restaurant we cleaned the tables, utensils, and also served food to customers. And as mechanic and cleaners we repaired, cleaned, and delivered the vehicles to the customers. We did lots of work. The job was quiet hectic but we were satisfied by the work we did.

We learned a lot from that exposure as an employee. We had a great experience with the customers. We learned what the customer is expecting and also what the owner is expecting from the employees. We experienced how owners treated their employees and ill-treated their employees in some situations. We learned that most of the employees were paid less, and loads of work was extracted from them. From the employee point of view we understood the difficulties faced by them. While working along with those employees, we gained some knowledge of how to work in stressful situations. We understood how the owners motivate their employees, and how they are showing their attitude towards the employees. Most of the owners were very strict to their employees.

Working as entrepreneurs. We became entrepreneurs on 11 October 2013. We planned to put up a juice stall and decided the resources we needed. We went to several wholesale dealers to get the resources at the lowest price. We didn't invest the entire amount we earned; we kept in reserve an amount for back up. And we started our venture by opening our juice stall at Codissia Road, Coimbatore. We decided Codissia Road because most of the college students and employees would gather at that place during lunch time. We planned to sell 250 ml of lime juice for Rs. 10. At the beginning we were running short of customers. As time passed by, we had few customers approaching us. At the end of the day we sold 18 cups and we earned only 45% of our capital investment. Our expectations were not fulfilled.

On the second day (12 October 2013) we were better of than the first day. We understood and identified all our problems and rectified those problems and issues. On the second day we came up with new strategies. First we decided

to change our location from Codissia Road to Gandhipuram bus stand, Coimbatore. We also reduced the quantity of the juice from 250 ml to 200 ml, and we reduced the price from Rs. 10 to Rs. 5. Our plans worked out and we were able to attract more customers. We also went to the nearby auto stand and sold. Climate also favored us on the second day. At the end of the day we sold more than 90 cups and earned 60% profit on our investment. As an Entrepreneur we learned a lot. We learned how to work as a team and also experienced how the team members will react at the time of stressful situations, how to plan things and how to execute them in correct mode. We learned how to be responsible while coordinating a business. The most important thing we learned is value for money.

Case 5

Anubhav was an experiential learning project we undertook for four days: for two days we had to work as employees and for the next two days we had to become entrepreneurs. There were certain restrictions posed on us: (1) each member could carry only Rs. 26/day for personal expenses. This was at par with the per capita income benchmark of below-poverty-line identified by the Government of India for rural India; and (2) Individuals could not reveal their identity and should not use any influence to secure jobs

Working as employees. Day one of Anubhav commenced on 9 October 2013 at approximately 7.30 A.M in the morning. All students including me walked out of PSGIM, in search of jobs. While Saravanan was trying to get a job as an acting driver (which was impossible to get without any influence or recommendation), SathyaNarayan and Vinod Kumar decided to wash cars and ended up working in Mr. Car Clean. Sathya and Vinod Kumar managed to wash around 20 cars on the

9th and 10th October 2013. It was the Ayudha Pooja season and they were not short of customers. They earned Rs. 800 together. Pardhu and Venkat Ram went to Gandhipuram and got a job at "i-net" browsing centre where they had to do data-entry (filling Aircel application form) and manage the browsing centre.

Meanwhile, Saravanan was unable to find job as an acting driver. So, he decided to go to Brookefields Mall to find a job. Finally he was lucky to get a job at Würth Car Spa. The supervisor was on leave that day and they were short of one person for marketing the services to the customers. Due to his ability to converse in English, the Regional Manager hired him for one day. Saravanan was able to successfully get 6 customers.

On Day 2, Saravanan lost his job since the supervisor returned. So, he joined Venkat Ram and Pardhu at i-net browsing centre. They processed around 200 forms for a pay of Rs1 per form but in the end of the day they bargained with the owner for increased pay and got paid Rs2 per form and earned Rs.400 for processing the forms and got an extra Rs.120 for maintaining the browsing centre and doing a couple of project works. At the end of Day 2, Saravanan and Pardhu went to distribute pamphlets to two colleges for a pay of Rs.300 while Venkat went for Marketing in an auto shop and got paid Rs100. At the end of two days each one managed to earn Rs.320/-. The allowance of Rs26/- was fully spent for travel (bus fare) while lunch was provided by the employers.

Working as entrepreneurs. On the 3rd and 4th day of Anubhav, we planned to put up a fruit stall in lieu of Ayudha Pooja and Saraswathi Pooja. We knew customers would buy fruits such as apples, oranges and sweet lemons. Saravanan, Sathya Narayanan and Vinod Kummar went to

the wholesale fruit dealers to buy fruits. They bought it from the fruit mandi (wholesale market) while Venkat and Pardhu hired an auto and a weighing machine. We found a spot at Flower Market and within a few minutes a policeman came and told us to get permission from the local police station. Sathya and Saravanan went to the Police Station and explained the reasons as to why we had put the stall. Unable to convince them, we decided to move elsewhere. We moved to a residential area nearby and we were able to sell the whole stock in about 20 minutes as the residents felt that our price was cheaper than what was offered outside in shops. Saravan said he learned that there was one thing common to customers: a customer may either come in Mercedes Benz or a Ford Figo, both need discounts, no matter what the given price is—they fight for it. As for Venkat, he learned to be patient and how to handle customers. Pardhu learned that one can earn money easily, if one comes outside four walls and explores and sees the world filled with lots of opportunities. As for Sathya, he learned the dignity of labour and after working at Mr. Clean Car Wash, he found that he can do any job in the world. What Vinod Kummar learned from the car wash is that whatever be the job, it should be done carefully and with perfection. We also learned to wash cars and are now washing our car by ourselves.

We learned that there are three types of customers, namely:

1. Window shoppers who ask for the price but have no intention to buy.
2. Discount customers who ask for discounts no matter what the price is.
3. Normal customers who will simply buy if the price is quite reasonable and will not bargain.

To sum up, the experience we gained from Anubhav was very useful in life. We went through a lot of emotions, struggles and hurdles. This has helped us to manage change better.

Case 6

Working as employees. The day was Wednesday the 9th October and we were thrilled about the experiential learning project we were about to begin. All students including me and my friend walked out of PSGIM, to search for a job with great enthusiasm. It was really challenging to get a job on the first day. We went to each and every shop available on Avinashi Road. They were not ready to give us jobs because we were willing to work only as daily wage employees. They wanted persons who could join as permanent employees on a monthly basis. Later on we walked towards Nava India and visited a residential area called Jains Apartments. We met an aged person and requested him to get us jobs. He asked us whether we could clean his car and a two wheeler. We accepted and started washing the car. We had perfectly cleaned both the vehicles within one and half hours. The car owner paid us Rs.300. After that we boarded a town bus to Gandhipuram and visited Adyar Anadha bhavan to seek a job. They informed us to come in a batch of minimum ten persons for packing sweets. Since we were a batch of only two, we could not get the job. So we left that place and again started searching for a job, while walking on the road we noticed a small sign board in the name of Aabharna Jewellers (fancy ornament), it was managed by a lady and her daughter. It was inside a furniture shop and so the shop was not fully visible to the public. We asked the owner if they could offer us a job. The owner lady thought for a while and asked us if we were interested in helping her make chains with the

colourful beads available with them. She said she would pay Rs.20/chain and we agreed to it. We made 8 chains on the first day and 10 chains on the second day individually. They paid us Rs 160/- on the first day and Rs.200 on the second day at the rate of Rs.20 per chain and also provided us with lunch. The lady was very happy with our jewel making because we tried to be as creative as possible. We told the lady about the lack of visibility the shop has and tried suggesting that a small stall could be put up on the road or before a textile shop because it would create more visibility and would attract more lady customers. We were lucky, because the lady immediately agreed to our idea and this paved way for entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship. As entrepreneurs, we outsourced the fancy ornaments that we had made earlier. The owner promised to pay us a commission for selling those ornaments. On the first day, it was really hectic as we went to Sri Devi Textiles in crosscut road to get permission. Since it was going to be a temporary stall on the road side, we thought of getting permission from the police. We went to B3 police station near Gandhipuram bus stand to get permission for putting up a stall near Sri Devi Textiles. Later on we approached Sri Devi Textiles and they helped us to put up a stall. Since the premises were their own, police permission was not actually required. On first day sales were a little slow and we could sell only for Rs.3500/-and we got a commission of Rs.450/-. On the final day of Anubhav, we put up the stall at the delivery section side; it was well exhibited and visible to all the ladies coming after purchasing. They matched their saris with our artificial jewel sets and purchased them happily. The sale amount went up to Rs.10740/- and we got commission of Rs.2000/-. The jewellery owner was very much pleased with our activity because she would not

have made this money in two days if not for us. From this experience we learned that location is the most important factor for any business. We learned how to cooperate, share resources, and negotiate successfully and many other things which will help us in the long run. We felt this was a wonderful opportunity to experience the world outside the four walls of PSGIM.

Other Learning Outcomes

A qualitative survey with open-ended questions was completed by the students. The purpose of the survey was to garner knowledge about the learnings they had acquired through their experiential learning endeavors. The survey included questions such as: "What have you gained through this experiential learning project?", "What are the learning outcomes and what are the qualities you have imbibed from this experience?" or "What do you think are important qualities a manger should imbibe to be successful?"

A content analysis of the survey revealed that the students enjoyed the exercise and had a very positive attitude towards the learning. The findings indicated that enthusiasm and involvement among the students were high, and that 88% the students benefitted from the activity. Twelve percent of the students did not complete the task neither to the faculties' expectation nor to their own. It was interesting to note that the female students performed the task much better than the class average and the outliers (12%) were six male students. One reason could be that they were less involved, not thoughtful, and did not make sufficient preparation. However, this requires further exploration.

Students indicated that the activities they engaged in made them realize the dignity of labor, and

that they felt that they would now appreciate every fellow being's contribution to society. They also shared that they experienced the importance of social and life skills and also had an opportunity to practice all of what they have otherwise learned. Most important of all, the students felt this project exposed them to ground realities and the learnings they have acquired would not have been possible either from other classroom techniques or books. Some of the learnings as quoted by the students are as follows:

- Working as employees, they experienced and understood the difficulties faced by a menial worker.
- Gained experience of working under a supervisor.
- Understood the value of money.
- Learned employees were paid less and loads of work was extracted from them.
- Importance of communication and persuasion skills and its impact over business.
- Need to change the style of communication according to people.
- The art of coping with stress while functioning as a team.
- Working towards a common goal without losing focus.
- The need to plan, be resourceful, and responsible.
- The need for being determined and high on perseverance.
- Importance of negotiation skills and being emotionally stable in business.
- The need for responding to every customer with a pleasant face.

- The first time joy of earning money through own endeavour and honest work which instils confidence and self-respect.
- Make a proper analysis of demand before proposing to sell any product or service.
- Location is one of the important factors which determine the success of any business.
- Instilling essential life skills like time and resources management, selling skills, the art of persuasion and maintaining equilibrium when in stress.
- One must respect every individual irrespective of the work that they do.

Conclusion

This experience demonstrates the fact that experience is a hard teacher who gives the test first and the lesson afterwards. Any book can state all the above facts in theory; however, implementing each and every one of them is what the actual learning experience is all about. What a man or woman becomes in life is a result of his or her education and experience in life. Many business schools are in the process of preparing students to become socially responsible managers/ entrepreneurs. They understand that there is significant shift in higher education in terms of students' influx. The Gen X culture that prevailed on campus for the last two decades does not exist anymore. For the next twenty years they will have to manage Generation Y students whose values, beliefs, motives, interest and learning patterns are different. The strategies that were employed in the classrooms and campus life to engage Generation X will no longer enthuse the new generation. Hence, B schools now need to rethink, innovate and redesign management education pedagogy in the light of

the new generational personality that has moved on campus. This study demonstrates that the experiential learning project had a positive impact on the Generation Y students and definitely could be included as a component in the pedagogy of B schools.

The current study examined the theory of experiential learning and its implication on learning among students in a business school with the following objectives: a) mould prospective managers with humility (with positive attitude and empathy for their co-workers irrespective of their level of job), b) bring about psychosocial maturity in students (to instil in students confidence, responsibility, perseverance, planfulness, individuality and cooperativeness), c) understand if the involvement, perseverance, and enthusiasm among students persisted in spite of the project being extended to four days, d) enrich the teaching learning experience and understand the impact experiential learning has over the students. The learning outcomes shared by the students revealed that experiential learning projects of this kind gives a real time experience which instills in students a sense of efficacy, responsibility, cooperativeness, planfulness, and perseverance. In essence the ultimate aim of this project was to help students understand reality and not '**perceive reality**'. This project appears to have given students an opportunity to wear the shoes of other professionals and experience the challenges they undergo on a day to day basis. At the same time this activity seems to have instilled in students values like dignity of labor, job empathy and positive attitude towards fellow beings.

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