EXPERIENTAL LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM
A Dynamic Model for Business and Leadership Education Using Short-Term Missions

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ABSTRACT: This three-year project demonstrates an effective, dynamic model of experiential learning for business students that is informed by 1) David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, 2) a comprehensive set of desired student learning outcomes, and 3) core values for cross-cultural partnerships. It is accomplished through multiple student led business and leadership conferences held in under-resourced communities in Uganda, working in partnership with local non-government organizations. A supporting highlight distinguishes between this program and commonly used practices in short-term mission trips.

INTRODUCTION

We have designed a dynamic educational program for university students that is informed by 1) David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, 2) a comprehensive set of desired student learning outcomes, and 3) core values for cross-cultural partnerships. It is accomplished through multiple student led business and leadership conferences held in under-resourced communities in Uganda, working in partnership with local non-government organizations (NGOs). The program, populated each year with 8 university students and two faculty members, begins with in-state training during the spring semester and commences in Uganda during the summer months where hundreds have participated in the conferences.

We have endeavored to provide a transformative learning experience for our students while serving the organizations and communities with whom we worked. In so doing, we sought to go beyond traditional classroom instruction, beyond the cross-cultural learning experience, and beyond the short-term mission-service trip, and thus deepen the transformative impact for both our students and our partners.

Pedagogy and the Process of Learning

The most effective pedagogies are built upon an accurate understanding of how people learn (Bain, 2004). To paraphrase NYU education professor Ken Bain in his work *What the Best College Teachers Do*, "If a student is not learning, you are not teaching." Through years of field-testing pedagogical practices in and out of the classroom, we are convinced that people learn best when they engage a subject as reflective practitioners. That is to say, transformative learning occurs when students have an opportunity to engage in a task, reflect on and learn from the experience, and test out their refined knowledge in a similar context. Our work is substantiated by the work of educational theorist David Kolb whose research led to the development of Experiential Learning Theory and its representative model of education. For Kolb, "Learning is the process

whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2014).

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model pictures a sequential, four-step cycle of the experiential learning process. The steps are as follows: 1. Concrete Experience, 2. Reflective Observation, 3. Abstract Conceptualization, and 4. Active Experimentation (Kolb, 2014).

1. Concrete Experience. Kolb's theory begins with the learner engaging in an activity, a "concrete experience," one which will form the basis of transformative learning. The focus of Stage One is on engaging in the task itself. This engagement with "concrete experience" is differentiated from a passive reception of knowledge (Kolb, 2014).
2. Reflective Observation. Stage Two marks the completion of the activity and invites the learner to reflect on the concrete experience. The learner steps back and reviews what happened. The focus of Stage Two is on reflection for the sake of description. The main question is: What happened? Using reflective writing, engaging debrief questions, and participating in discussion with others are tools used in this stage (Kolb, 2014).
3. Abstract Conceptualization. Stage Three describes a movement from describing the experience to understanding the experience. The focus of Stage Three is on interpretation and adoption of new or refined knowledge. The main questions are: "What does the experience mean?" and "What did I learn?" As it is linked to Stage Two, the tools of reflective writing, engaging debrief questions, and participating in discussion with others are useful. The learner brings the experience into conversation with prior knowledge and experiences, looking for convergences and divergences. This dialogical interpretive process results in new knowledge, and refined understanding (Kolb, 2014).
4. Active Experimentation. Stage Four moves the learner from abstract conceptualization to "active experimentation," during which the new or refined knowledge is tested in a second, follow-up experience. The focus of Stage Four is informed application. The main question is: How can I apply what I have learned? This stage is key to deepening the learning process in that it anchors the knowledge in a real-life context. Doing something a second time, after a period of reflection, interpretation, and planning increases the confidence of the learner and the quality of the output (Kolb, 2014).

Anthropology and the Product of Learning

Identifying and measuring student learning outcomes are crucial steps in providing a transformational learning experience (Driscoll & Wood, 2007) These learning outcomes must align with an accurate anthropological understanding. That is to say, one must first come to terms with what a human being is. A faithful, fully-orbed Christian anthropology suggests that we are more than "thinking things" or "brains on a stick" (Smith, 2013). We are embodied creatures who engage the world as whole persons, through what we could refer to as "heads, hearts, and hands" (Hollinger, 2005). It follows that transformative learning requires engagement of all aspects of our personhood. Three categories of student learning outcomes flow from this understanding of our personhood: 1. Knowledge, 2. Virtues, and 3. Skills (Plantinga, 2002). This "KVS Model" attempts to not simply reflect a robust and accurate anthropology, but also to avoid common distortions of the purpose(s) of education that have persisted throughout the history of American higher education. Namely, we seek to avoid the distortion sometimes found in the liberal arts college model that describes the purpose of education to be the formation of a certain kind of person, while avoiding the distortion sometimes found in the vocational-technical college model that describes the purpose of education to be the acquisition of a set of credentials or skills that will lead to gainful employment (Thelin, 2011). Both of these purposes are good, but incomplete.

1. Knowledge. The head is the target of learning on this level. This is the realm of the intellect; of cognitive ability and content. It includes a student's ability to understand material, engage in careful analysis, and synthesize new and existing information to create new knowledge. Growth in knowledge includes specific content as well, including a subject's history, key figures, terminology, and advanced concepts (Plantinga, 2002).
2. Virtues. The heart is the target of learning on this level. This is the realm of character formation. The education of the heart results in a student reflecting the character qualities of Christ, dispositions that motivate and guide action. The classical virtues

handed down from Scripture through Plato and Aquinas comprise a helpful list: faith, hope, love, wisdom, justice, courage, and self-control (Plantinga, 2002).

3. Skills. The hands are the target of learning on this level. This is the realm of practical application. When a student has undergone skill development, they have acquired the ability to perform a task with competence and confidence. Skills can be categorized into hard skills – those technical and specific in application, and soft skills – those which are interpersonal and broader in application. While hard skills are more scientific, soft skills are more artistic (Plantinga, 2002).

Transformational learning must find its ultimate expression in the practical application (skill/hands) of knowledge (knowledge/head) guided by character (virtues/heart). The shaping of each of these three areas comprises our categories of desired learning outcomes for our students.

Cross-Cultural Partnership

Our ability to provide something of benefit to our international partners is of critical importance (Elmer, 2006). Thus, we were highly intentional in the project planning process. Three core values drove us: 1. Holistic Approach, 2. Reciprocity, and 3. Sustainability.

1. Holistic Approach. Rooted in a robust theology of creation, we affirm that humans are made in God's image and are called to cultivate the possibilities inherent in the created order (Genesis 1:26-28, New International Version). Though broken through the fall, God's redemptive purview encompasses all of what he has made, and indeed, all of human cultivation. There is no realm of human activity that God views with disinterest (Colossians 1:16-19). Rather, God uses his image bearers to redeem and work productively in all areas of life, including business and leadership (Sherman & Hendricks, 1990). Further, since we are made soul, mind, and body, provision made for the flourishing of any of these is a God-honoring and God-blessed endeavor (Keller, 2012). This understanding undergirds the importance of business and leadership training in the economy of God and the full redemption of his creation. Teaching a conference attendee marketing principles to strengthen her business so that she

can provide for her children's school fees is a reflection of this holistic value.

2. Reciprocity: This value represents our commitment to mutual program design and benefit. As Christian educators, we have a responsibility to both steward the learning experience of our students and serve our external partners (Morgan & Toms Smedley, 2010). In so doing, we have tried to go beyond the traditional cross-cultural learning experience model (as well as traditional classroom model) which emphasizes impact on the student/goer, as well as the traditional mission trip model which emphasizes impact on the external recipient. Interdependence and mutual transformation are the goals, ones that are affirmed by Scripture (Romans 12:3-8). The impact is bi-directional, or reciprocal.

3. Sustainability: We want to offer something of lasting value. So, we partner with NGO's who have a long-term presence in their communities. The training and material is given to them so they can both follow up with conference attendees, and so they can model the knowledge, virtues, and skills taught.

LEVEL 1

Team Preparation
Kolb's Stage 1: Concrete Experience
State-Side Preparation

Building cultural intelligence during state-side preparation helps expedite Kolb's Reflective Observation stage once on mission (Livermore, 2009). As students have concrete experiences, this pre-established framework intersects with their present reality and either converges or diverges. Of particular note are those experiences that are inconsistent from established perceptions conceived during state-side preparation. This is easy to identify as students raise questions or make statements while on the field, most of which start with "I thought" or "I imagined."

Some may suggest that such elevated preparation tampers with the authenticity of the experiential learning process, that it in some way robs the discovery process. We suggest that any experiential learning that is exceedingly above a student's readiness level inhibits them from proceeding through Kolb's model due to intense feelings of being overwhelmed or ill-equipped, sometimes leading to perceptions of defeat that translate into corresponding behavior (Martin, Franc,

& Zounkova, 2004). Experiential learning, in any scope or setting, is best accomplished when participants are able to reference and build upon prior experiences and knowledge.

While state-side, this cultural intelligence training is delivered in eight weekly pre-trip meetings and includes attention to the following contexts: sociocultural, economic, political, historical, linguistic, spiritual, and technological (Davies, 2015). Means of sharing include lecture from leaders and presentations from students who have completed research on designated topics. Increasing their individual cultural intelligence, though beginning state-side, occurs throughout the program.

A significant part of student preparation is the actual material they teach along with key andragogic methods. Topics and lesson outlines are provided to the students, who are placed in teams of two for teaching the material. In our experience, allowing the student teams to select topics and build lesson plans from scratch tends to exceed capability. Alternatively, 91% of all student teams report increased levels of confidence in preparation and delivery due to being provided the initial material. Once topics are assigned, students are required to research the subject in depth and integrate a biblical principles and concepts.

The conferences we hold in Uganda are in two primary settings: urban and remote villages. After returning to the same locations for multiple years, we have developed topics for a beginner track for new guests and an advanced track for returning guests. Conference topics include: budgeting and savings, micro-financing, marketing, innovation, business planning, environmental scanning, differential benefit, stewardship, and working with a partner (Brannback & Carsrud, 2015). After student pairs direct their own study of their assigned topics, we move on to contextualizing the material and adopting effective practices to teach it.

As for contextualizing the material to fit the environment, students reference the material taught and provided to them in previous meetings. In addition, they utilize us and fellow students who are returning for a second year when attempting to frame their material.

Most of our guests are adult learners who bring a significant volume and quality of experience. They tend to be internally motivated, often desiring a better quality of life. Consequently, material has to be practical and taught in an active, engaging manner. In our specific scenario, many urban guests tend to be able to speak English and have an S6 education, while in the village few speak any English and even fewer have exceeded a Primary education. Further, those in the village are almost exclusively farmers, while those in urban settings have more traditional opportunities for business ventures. Therefore, even with translators, workshops for the village have to be simplified, often using images instead of words, while examples tend to center on agriculture.

In-Country Preparation

Though active involvement begins state-side, authentic experiential learning occurs once on the field and there is a transaction between the student and their new environment. As stated previously, the "concrete experience" is differentiated from a passive reception of knowledge (Kolb, 2014). Every moment in-country provides preparatory opportunities for the students and requires a high level of intentionality from the leaders.

Cultural Immersion Activity

A student actively engaging in the culture is essential to diminishing any anxiety, building confidence towards workshop presentations, and increasing their cultural intelligence (Livermore, 2009). Again, if the demands of the experiment are too far above one's individual readiness, they will focus on those feelings of being overwhelmed instead of tracking towards engagement. One successful activity that we have designed is a scavenger hunt through a local town. Placed in pairs, the students are provided an identical list of items to purchase and tasks to achieve, along with the same amount of money. The list ranges in activities from purchasing a kilogram of rice from a street vendor to riding a boda boda (motorcycle taxi) back to the host home. Dropped off in various locations around the town, the students must return to the host home by a predesignated time. We do this in a small city called Mbale due to its size, safety, and ease of navigation. The winning team will accomplish everything on the list and return with the most money. This activity easily translates into Kolb's next stage of reflection as students return with great stories and even better observations, leading to greater cultural intelligence.

Homestays

One of the most anticipated preparation activities is the homestays – a time of connecting students with

nationals to stay overnight in their homes. This breaks down the tourist mentality (even the short-term mission trip mentality) of students and allows for a robust integration and understanding of cultures more than any other activity. As excited and nervous as the students are, so are the nationals. We utilize host families who are deeply associated with our NGO partner and are located within the same village. Host nationals always range in provision and family structure, including mud huts with thatched roofs to traditional Ugandan brick and mortar homes; from widows with children to large families. Regardless, hosts are quick to adopt our students as their own and always provide them the best that they have to offer, which often means giving up the best room or bed in the home. Stories, meals, and cultural differences/similarities are quickly shared between hosts and students, establishing lasting friendships and further increasing cultural understanding and competency.

Kolb's Stage 2: Reflective Observation

As leaders, mostly while in-country, we function as facilitators with intentions to empower students to discover, lead, and generate ideas. This role becomes most prevalent during times of reflection. It is important to note that observation begins from the moment that the students land on foreign soil – a constant comparing to preconceived frameworks (some correct, others incorrect) against what they are experiencing through all five senses. This healthy tension births many questions.

Responding to Questions as a Facilitator

Times of reflection are built into the daily schedule, typically as end of day debriefs. However, the best tool to generate higher analysis in students throughout the day is to respond to their questions with "why?" rather than a direct explanation. For example, when the students ask why most of the mannequins they see in store shops are Caucasian, we respond by saying, "Why do you think they are?" This tool is similar to the 5 Whys management technique developed by Sakichi Toyoda for Toyota Motor Corporation; each "why" forms the basis of the next question (Ohno, 2006). This tool is especially effective during travel times, when students have their faces plastered to the van windows (cameras in hand) in deep observation overload. Students are motivated to reconcile differences between their established framework and what they

experience. Instead of being solution based, the leader empowers the student to clarify these differences with "one's own eyes" by asking "why" (Ohno, 2006). This approach 1) energizes students to reflect even more, 2) increases their confidence and ability to respond to challenging moments, and 3) punctuates their personal self-worth with an exclamation mark.

Again, the students' experiences and observation are ongoing. So too should intentional reflection.

Team Debriefs

An additional tool for igniting Kolb's Reflective Observation stage is the daily team debrief (Drucker, 2006). Not all of our students enjoy these end of the day debriefs. Some of this is due to practical reasons, most of which revolve around being emotionally and physically tired. This internal tension of reconciling and understanding the collision of two worlds for most of them has been occurring from the moment they awake under a mosquito net, drenched in sweat. As such, any activity beyond a game of cards can yield frustration and disengagement by the evening. As leaders, we press through. We may have to remind them of the importance of reflection, but we still do it. Formalizing this stage in Kolb's model leads to greater success in the Abstract Conceptualization stage, which is critical for cross-cultural education (The Seven Standards, 2016).

Our daily debriefs are led by a student who has been provided a list of potential questions to kindle conversation. Areas of consideration include: drive (How do you feel emotionally, physically, and spiritually?), cultural knowledge (Where did you notice an emphasis being placed on the importance of the community over the importance of the individual?), spiritual (In what ways do you see God already at work here?), and observational (What needs stood out to you? What are the opportunities for change?). As leaders, we infuse the conversation with words of encouragement and affirmation. We request full participation and, to their surprise, many students discover that they are having the same feelings, questions, and observations as others in the group. Participation in a supportive team that facilitates development and growth aligns with Elton Mayo's Human Relations Theory of Management (Mayo, 2003). This intentional encounter with relatability depressurizes some of the internal tension individuals experience and drives motivation (Mayo, 2003).

LEVEL TWO

On-Mission

As previously stated, the Reflective Observation stage gives rise to ideas and modifications of individual frameworks. This becomes most clearly evident when the students review their prepared workshops in light of these new experiences and reflection.

Kolb's Stage 3: Abstract Conceptualization

It is the responsibility of the student teams to take their empirical data collected from various concrete experiences and reflective observations and integrate it into compelling workshops; in other words, to become reflective practitioners. Once again, as leaders, we act as facilitators guiding them towards success while they are ultimately responsible for conceiving a robust lesson plan and overall workshop. We liken it to the idea of using paint to provide boundaries on an open field to play soccer. We will even put up goals and provide rules, but the expression of how they play within it is up to them. In this stage of Kolb's theory, our role often plays out two ways: being available to respond to questions (which often looks like us responding with yet another question) and them presenting to us what they have designed.

Due to having 10-15 total workshops prepared between four student pairs, it is critical that the students know what each team is working on for cohesion and no egregious overlap. Simultaneously, they look to build upon the workshop prior to their own in a way that emphasizes a lesson point or example. Thus, we designate time for them to work on lesson plans at the same time and in the same room. The level of team support and untethered dialogue is always compelling to observe as a leader.

Student teams are provided the opportunity to teach at least one beginner track and one advanced track. The size and scope of our conferences, along with the ability to start on time, ultimately determine how many workshops students are responsible for. Consequently, a team may have prepared three workshops but, usually at the last minute, only present one or two. It is a fantastic lesson in flexibility and preparedness. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, the conferences are held in two settings: urban and village – each with their own uniqueness. This requires additional time to take what has occurred during the reflection time and translate it into both settings.

Working in pairs lends itself to the development of virtues and skills including: teamwork, communication, critical thinking, an attitude of commitment, and patience. As leaders, we determine the pairings while in the states; in fact, it is one of the first items shared with the team. Our approach is simple: create complimentary teams based on strengths and weaknesses. This, in itself, can lead to challenges. An external thinker with a bubbly attitude (great for energizing a classroom of adults) can naturally grate against the internal processor who likes order and control (great for developing cohesive lesson plans).

Kolb's Stage 4: Active Experimentation

Proceeding reflection and conceptualization, students become informed practitioners. Active experimentation increases when, as faculty, we step aside to allow students room to have ownership – this inherently generates successes, failures, and questions. For every conference, both tracks are held simultaneously. The role of the students is to create and lead in an environment where learning can occur. When not teaching, they assist other student teams as needed and interact with guests during breaks. As leaders, we emcee the event – providing greetings, introductions, and commentary in between lessons – along with observing every lesson (the benefit of having two leaders on the team). Our greatest challenge during a workshop: when to jump up and interject and when to let it continue as is. When the train starts to derail, there are multiple factors in play – the desire guests to experience deep and meaningful value in the workshop (which makes us as leaders to want to jump up and interject), and conversely the desire for students to build confidence and press through a challenging question or a translation problem (which makes us as leaders want to stay seated and be quiet). As leaders, we have not figured out what the secret formula is other than allowing room for mistakes to happen; it is part of experimentation (Alfi, Katz, & Assor, 2004).

Time to Teach

Leading this trip multiple times has taught us that presenting information in a lecture format cross-culturally to adults yields marginal returns. Engagement and interaction with Ugandans in a classroom setting elicits greater transformative learning – this is the core of andragogy theory. For students, most of whom who have had little to no training beyond the traditional classroom presentation find this to be the most difficult part. Most of them can go up front and present information. Fewer know how to present information, ask questions, field questions, assess immediate

understanding, and be creative on the spot. Even with the state-side training in andragogy, many resort to lecture style teaching: you sit and listen while I bank information in you.

We address this in multiple ways, which includes asking our students a simple question early on in the training: what do your favorite professors do? Students are quick to share stories of professors they have responded well to because of humor, practical examples used, care displayed towards the student learning, etc. And, it can always be summed up in one statement: their favorite professors were engaging. "That's your starting point," is always our response. As we break down their observations even further, we encourage them to adopt one or two practices that they feel comfortable with.

A second way to move our students away from being mere lecturers to engaging teachers is building in questions to their lesson plans that ignite a deeper level of critical thinking, reflect level of understanding, or emphasize key points. And, in this, we teach them to ask directed questions instead of passive questions (Brookfield, 2012). For example, it is better to say, "Someone give me an example of how you currently use a mango," versus, "Does anyone have an example of how you currently use a mango?" The more times they teach their sessions, the more accomplished they become at using this tool.

An additional andragogic method is task-oriented small group activities held during the lessons. Adults are self-directed, consequently, instruction should allow learners to discover things for themselves as students guide and help when needed. Students develop these activities back in the states, but are often radically redesigned once new experiences and observations are made while on mission. A workshop on innovation can translate into activities where students provide small groups very traditional and highly available items such as a sunflower (often considered a weed), a bag of chicken feathers (a discarded resource), or sugarcane (a sweet treat mostly savored by children). Guests then have to brainstorm (mind you, a word not easily translated in Uganda) new ways to transform these products.

Teaching Environment

A component of Active Experimentation include the physical teaching environment (Kolb, 2014). In our scenario, we find ourselves in classroom settings foreign to us, ranging from a round thatched roof outdoor room, to nailing butcher paper to the wall of a mud hut. Students are afforded the opportunity to explore, be flexible, and quick to respond regarding the environment and class size. In one village setting, workshops were held under tarps being held up by recently-cut wood poles. Once the rain came, those tarps became traps, holding gallons of water until they eventually collapsed. In response, the students moved all 67 guests into an elementary school room made of mud brick. Teaching in the cramped space was made more challenging by the torrential rain hammering the tin roof above.

Repeating the Model

As mentioned, we hold multiple conferences in various settings; each with several workshops. Critical to student learning is that they are afforded the opportunity to experience the entirety of Kolb's model multiple times while on mission (see Figure 1). Teach a workshop, reflect and receive feedback, conceive changes, experiment, then do it all over again. Student partners Ben and Ashlyn diligently prepared for their workshops, one of which was "Innovation." This workshop tends to be one of the most difficult to teach for multiple cultural reasons. Starting with great eagerness, their first time teaching the topic did not go well. Content became muddled in impractical theory, they spoke too quickly, and the activities were confusing. Providing feedback after each time they taught with the opportunity to implement and experiment again and again moved them closer to achieving an impactful final workshop (Skinner, 2014). Behaviorist B. F. Skinner suggests that the process of moving an individual closer to the desired behavior through fixed interval reinforcement (feedback) is known as behavioral shaping (Skinner, 2014). It is important to note that they became better teachers with each pass but, more importantly, they learned about perseverance and commitment.

Figure 1
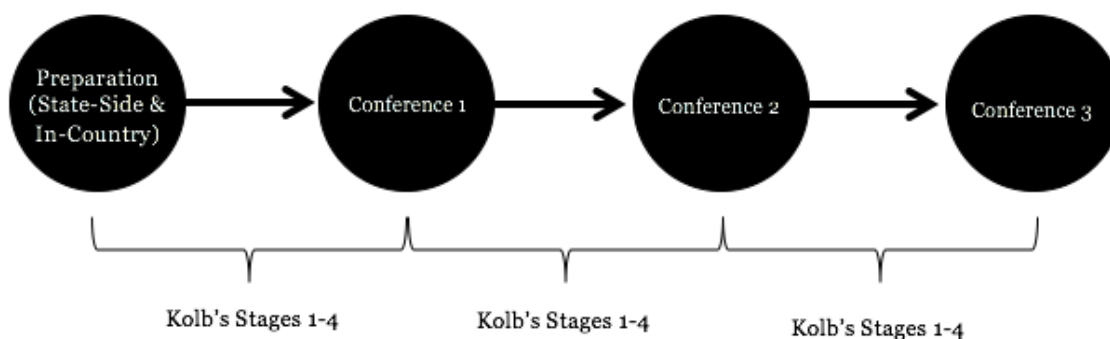
As Kolb's Active Experimentation implies, our students are experimenting which inherently suggests successes and failures. As observers, we leaders take rigorous notes during workshops. Our feedback is timely (fixed interval reinforcement), specific, and guiding (Skinner, 2014). We reinforce the positives and ask questions to help discover ways to improve the weaknesses. Skinner refers to this process as operant conditioning, using positive and negative reinforcement to create predictable outcomes (Skinner, 2014). To increase predictable student outcomes we have discovered greater success when focusing on no more than two or three behaviors to reinforce. Further, desired outcomes, using both positive and negative reinforcement, increase when behavioral reflection is addressed first by the student. A great leading question for such a time is, "What do you think you did well on and what is one thing you want to improve on?" Again, engaging them in the reflection process increases critical thinking skills and necessary change.

An additional tool for assessment is the conference evaluations conducted with every guest. This one page evaluation requests demographic information along with guests' opinions on workshop content, lessons that are most and least helpful, the quality of the teaching, etc. (Skinner, 2014). This, along with leader feedback, becomes a powerful tool in reigniting Kolb's theory.

LEVEL THREE
Program Evaluation and Learning Outcomes

Inasmuch as we take the students through the cycles of Kolb's model multiple times, evaluation takes the shape of an iterative process. A student teaches. Evaluation occurs. A student teaches again. And so on. This cycle of evaluation culminates in a final, comprehensive evaluation. The goal of this evaluation is to gauge the totality of student learning and service impact.

Students

For our students, this evaluation happens on several levels. Some of them participate in the program as a partial fulfillment of International Business, a Business Administration core elective. The assignments from this course are used to determine their level of learning. Others have used this program to meet academic internship requirements in Business as Mission or Business Administration majors. Additionally, some students have chosen to integrate components of the program into their Senior Project requirements.

For all of our students, their learning is evaluated and reinforced through team debriefs, individual meetings with the leaders, and surveys (Skinner, 2014). Their development is assessed using the knowledge-virtues-skills (KVS) framework.

1. Knowledge. Knowledge acquisition begins in the pre-trip team trainings, but is deepened and augmented during the trip through immersion in the experiential learning process. Of the areas assessed, students reported the greatest knowledge growth in the following: Ugandan culture (98%), cultural intelligence (94%), and self-knowledge (93%). These were followed by knowledge of God/theology (91%) and business concepts (85%).

Students grow in their understanding of varying conceptions of time across cultures through their training in time orientation and their experiences as clock-time people in an event-time culture. Students grow in their knowledge of the discipline of business. Non-business majors learn business concepts and principles they have had no experience with prior to the program, while business majors deepen their conceptual and practical knowledge as they research and prepare to teach both beginner and advanced level workshops. Students have further reported growing in their understanding of God's work in the world, the connection to business and development, as well as their roles and responsibilities in God's global kingdom.

Some specific statements from students on knowledge growth experiences include:

- "I learned a lot about the Ugandan culture, and about how to integrate into a different culture."
- "I grew in self-awareness when teaching and I grew in knowledge of my capabilities."
- "My knowledge of God's total Kingdom was challenged and expanded. My understanding of God's love for people also really changed in a deep, profound way."
- "I began to recognize the power in equipping people above giving them resources."
- "I learned many business principles that I had no previous knowledge of."

2. <u>Virtues</u>. Growth in Christian character occurs throughout the trip as students are presented with continuous opportunities for virtue development. Of the areas assessed, students reported the greatest virtue growth in the following: joy and gratitude for God's blessings (95%), love for God and others (94%), and commitment to working for mercy and justice (94%). These were followed by growth in confidence in crossing cultures (91%) and courage to face challenging situations (89%). Courage is built as students rise to the occasion in the act of teaching, meeting head on and

overcoming fears of public speaking, incompetence, and perceived judgmentalism. They grow in love by choosing to serve sacrificially those inside and outside the team with whom they do not connect or fully understand. They describe significant growth in faith in God as they deepen their appreciation of the strength and beauty of their Ugandan brothers and sisters as their co-imagers of God and co-laborers for his kingdom. Hope in God grows as they picture a better future for Uganda ignited by signs of Him already at work, and by the clear impact of their work and the work of previous teams. They describe their commitment to mercy and justice as having deepened as they examine their responsibilities of stewardship and kingdom purpose in a world riven by poverty, conflict, and disease.

Some specific statements from students on virtue growth experiences include:

- "While I was teaching we had to move locations twice, and it tsunami rained on a tin roof. Everything in me wanted to go hide in the team van, but I was forced to persevere. My partner and I pushed through our lesson; it is now one of my favorite memories of both years."
- "My heart was really stirred to make a difference in developing nations."
- "While in Uganda, I learned how to overcome fear and to walk courageously. It was like dropping an old direction and taking hold of a new one, even though I didn't know where I was going. Scary but so freeing."
- "This trip stretched my ability to serve others. Between the team I was with and the people we were there to serve I decided to put myself last and watch the needs of others first. This was a hugely valuable experience for me that has had a lasting change."
- "I was inspired to love people with a sincere, genuine love that is from Christ and takes truly understanding a person."
- "Patience and compassion were two virtues that were stretched to their limits on this

trip and I'm a better person because of that time."

3. <u>Skills</u>. Students report skill development in several key areas, displaying increasing levels of competence and confidence. Of the areas assessed, students reported the greatest skill growth in the following: communication (95%) and relating with others cross-culturally (95%). These were followed by growth in collaborating with others/working with peers (88%) and public communication/teaching (87%). Key to developing communication skills is the preparation process guided by the leaders, the act of teaching, reflective debriefing, and the opportunity to teach multiple times. The cross-cultural context causes additional growth in teaching ability – specifically creativity, adaptability, and persistence – given the cultural differences, technological limitations, and unique classroom settings. Soft skills such as collaboration are enhanced through the use of teaching teams, and team brainstorming and debriefing sessions. Students take advantage of opportunities to grow in other skills such as navigating local cross-cultural environments and leading in team-building activities, devotions, and prayer.

Some specific statements from students on skill growth experiences include:

- "I learned how to communicate across cultural barriers and how to constantly improvise during lessons, conversations, and daily routines."
- "I had never spoken to a group using a translator before. It forced me to consider my words and make sure my ideas and concepts could relate to anyone."
- "I was encouraged in my teaching ability and felt confident about my leadership on a new level after this trip."
- "I was so outside of my comfort zone that I had to rely on my teammates' ideas to improve my lessons and ease social dynamics when I was exhausted. It taught me to operate in a new level of collaboration with my peers."

- "The skill of teaching was the greatest and most valuable growth I saw in myself. I learned to read the crowd for understanding, to repeat and re-explain concepts, and apply the concepts to real world examples."
- "The biggest skill I grew in was public speaking. Before I taught my first lesson while still Stateside for the team, I was always scared of public speaking. My heart would beat fast, and I would often get a headache from the stress. However, while preparing for that first presentation, I realized that the lesson was for the people receiving it and not myself. Once I took the focus off myself, I presented confidently and without stress. Since then, I've had no problems with public speaking."

Conference Participants and Partners

For conference participants and NGO partners, we attempt to determine level of impact through a few different modes, including conference attendee surveys (multi-year approach), a final debriefing meeting between NGO staff and our team of students, and an extensive evaluation meeting with the NGO executive leadership. Through these means, we are able to gather important data to test against our three core values for cross-cultural partnership. It is clear from the data received that the values are being met in hosting these business and leadership conferences.

The total number of participants for the three conferences offered in 2015 was 207, with 119 first-time attendees in the beginner track and 88 in advanced track. The average age of the urban conference participant was 31 (median: 27), while the overall average age was 42 (median: 51), and the age span was 17-72. A total of 170 surveys were completed, 88 and 82 for the beginner and advanced tracks respectively. Among first-time participants, 57% do not own a business, and of those, 96% desire to start one. 85% named "money" as the single largest barrier to starting and growing a business, while 57% named workshop topics on finance as being the most significant. 100% of participants indicated they would like to attend a future conference.

Among returning participants in the advanced track, the majority were business owners, representing a variety of fields, including grocery, mobile phone

airtime, retail clothing, food, hotel, farming, pigs, poultry, charcoal, and sewing. Many – especially urban participants (46%) – started businesses as a result of a previous conference, feeling either inspired to do so or equipped and thus able to implement a planned venture. 73% indicated an increase in their income since a previous conference, ranging from 10-70%.

When asked how their lives had been impacted by a previous conference, participants responded along with statements like:

- Better budgeting and financial management
- Partnered with someone to start a business and savings group
- New business ideas and increased creativity
- Learned how to use surrounding resources and adapt
- Determination and motivation have increased
- This conference has changed my life

When asked how their families had benefitted from a previous conference, participants responded with statements like these:

- Shared skills and learning with my family
- Managing resources wisely
- Able to pay for kid's school fees and buy books
- Able to afford more food, able to clothe my children
- Increased sustainability for my family

The depth of impact is seen in stories such as one man who showed up for the advanced track conference with a hospital IV port still in his hand. At the end of the program, he stood up and shared that he temporarily left the hospital because he could not miss an opportunity to attend another of our conferences due to the positive impact of previous ones. He shared how prior to attending our conference in 2013 he was not able to support his family with basic shelter or regular meals. Now, after learning differential benefit at that first conference, he purchases fruits and vegetables indigenous to Kenya and sells them in Uganda. In addition to providing a stable home environment just three years later, he has been able to put his eldest son through police academy and is now in a position to cover the schooling of the rest of his children. Stories like this have been consistently shared with us over the years.

1. <u>Holistic Approach</u>. The selection of our partner NGO is in alignment with this holistic value, inasmuch as they focus on what they call "whole life discipleship," or "discipleship for development," addressing physical, social, and spiritual needs in the communities in which they serve. The holistic value is affirmed by data that show the training is seen as fitting within the bigger picture of what God is doing in the communities in which we work. We hear our partners and conference participants making no distinction between ministry and marketplace, sacred and secular. They view their current or future businesses as vehicles through which God provides for their families and communities (Keller, 2012). And, as they seek to honor God and prosper financially, they view our training as an opportunity from God to strengthen their businesses, homes, and communities.

2. <u>Reciprocity</u>. The reciprocal value is affirmed by data that show both partners and participants view our relationship as a true partnership, one in which each party gives and receives, one in which there is mutual benefit. The breadth of impact is seen in the number of conference participants returning for a second and third year, as well as greater-than-expected participants for a second track added this past year.
We make every effort to present our material and interact interpersonally with a spirit of humility and teachability through learning as much as possible about the local cultural context both prior to and during the trip. In addition, we attempt to display these qualities by drawing out, affirming, and building upon the resources already present in the people with whom we work (Elliot, 1999). Our partners communicate their appreciation for our approach in this regard, as well as sharing their appreciation for our intentionality about submitting to their leadership and learning from their wisdom.

3. <u>Sustainability</u>. The sustainable value is affirmed by information collected both from participants and NGO leaders. As shared in the previous section, returning to the same locations each year have afforded us an opportunity to gauge impact firsthand through individuals giving specific examples from their lives. The positive impact on businesses, homes, and communities is evident after three years. We can validate that hundreds of lives, and generations, have been impacted. The

nature of what we provide allows for sustainability beyond our visit, as we seek to build upon current capacities and provide additional tools and skills. Rather than fostering an unhealthy dependency on outside sources, we have sought to encourage capacity development that results in greater self-sufficiency and interdependence (Hoksbergen, 2012).

The sustainable value is also seen in the work of our NGO partners, who follow up with conference participants for encouragement, problem-solving, and additional training. Further, this past year, all staff have agreed to take up the challenge to start their own small businesses in order to learn the principles from the inside and to embody them so as to set a good example for their communities and conference participants. It has been a powerful experience to hear them share one-by-one how they have invested in livestock, planted a banana tree grove, or purchased a small corporate rental property.

CONCLUSION

This paper purposed to demonstrate the effectiveness of David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model for business students during short-term missions. What has been discovered in this three-year study suggests 1) the partnership of multiple management theories with Kolb's model elevates the transformative learning experience and increases predictable outcomes, 2) intentionality towards all aspects of our personhood using the KVS framework serves to round the cumulative effect of Kolb's model, and 3) cross-cultural partnerships affirm the need to focus on sustainability in the resources we provide. Additionally, executing Kolb's model in nontraditional settings has challenged us to critically evaluate the learning provision typically afforded to students in the classroom.

ENDNOTES

[1] Prior to the learning cycle beginning, the educator has two main responsibilities: identification of desired student learning outcomes, and designing the educational experience.
Some may argue that a pure application of Kolb's theory necessitates the learner enter the learning experience without prior preparation, that they commence with nothing but themselves. We sought to prepare our students for the experience because we were committed to certain categories of learning outcomes, and because too high a degree of stress can diminish the learning achieved. As Bain puts it in What the Best College Teachers Do, "[The best teachers] have a strong faith in the ability of students to learn and in the power of a healthy challenge, but they also have an appreciation that excessive anxiety and tension can hinder thinking" (96). A cross-cultural, developing world experience brings with it a significant amount of stress in its own right, but when one adds the requirement to teach several times in formal settings, a threshold of acceptable stress is reached. Going into the experience "blind" would be counterproductive to the learning we desired for our students.

[2] Though these categories of learning are not original with him, our appreciation to Cornelius Plantinga for his presentation of them together in a model of sorts in his work *Engaging God's World: A Christian Vision of Faith, Learning, and Living.*

[3] Dichotomies of sacred/secular, spiritual/natural, ministry/marketplace, and the like are at best misleading oversimplifications.

[4] http://www.soe.org/explore/the-7-standards/. See #2 "Empowering Partnerships." Its "primary focus on intended receptors," seems to unnecessarily hedge another stated commitment: "plans which benefit all participants."

[5] See Paul's personal example of mutuality in Romans 1:10-11. See also Paul's discussions on the interdependency of Christians in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 4.

[6] Cross cultural communication is a common area for students to notice differences between their preconceptions and their experiences, with some reporting greater difficulty than expected, and others reporting less difficulty.

[7] Results are from student team member assessment.

[8] The partner NGOs are faith-based and, therefore, we teach our material within a biblical context. For example, students teaching on budgeting may also teach Genesis 39 where Joseph became overseer (or steward) of the king's house.

[9] Beginner track workshops have included the following topics: environmental scanning, building a business plan, micro-financing, budgeting and savings, innovation, working with a partner, principles of marketing, and strategy. The advanced track builds off of these workshops held in the beginner track and include the following topics: personal strengths assessment, pricing strategy, advanced innovation, and project management.

[10] In Uganda, there are seven primary years of education. Students who pass the Primary Learning Exam (PLE) can progress to Secondary school, which has two stages: senior one (S1) to senior four (S4), followed by the O-level exams, then on to senior five (S5) and senior six (S6). According to data collected from the World Bank, 54.6% of students complete their last grade of primary education. (http://data.worldbank.org/country/uganda)

[11] 57% of students reported their cultural understanding and confidence grew as a result of this activity.

[12] 71% of students reported their cultural understanding and confidence grew as a result of this activity.

[13] 91% of students reported deepened reflection and cultural understanding as a result.

[14] 95% of students reported that debrief sessions helped them process experiences and deepen learning.

[15] 90% of students reports that their on-field cross cultural experiences enhanced the quality of their workshop lessons.

[16] Uganda culture is primarily known to be on "event time", compared to Western culture that is on "clock time." Accordingly, they tend to have ambiguous beginnings and ends. We may be scheduled to start a conference at 9:00 am but may not actually begin until two hours later.

[17] We use a combination of tools -- including StrengthsFinder/Strengths-Based Leadership and the DISC Profile -- to assess each team member and match them for greatest effectiveness.

[18] It is not required for students to participate in the program for credit. Roughly half of the students choose this option every year.

[19] Ugandan culture (4.88/5.00), cultural intelligence (4.71), self-knowledge (4.65), God/theology (4.53), business concepts (4.24).

[20] Joy and gratitude for God's blessings (4.76/5.00), love for God and others (4.71), commitment to working for mercy and justice (4.71), confidence in crossing cultures (4.53), courage to face challenging situations (4.47).

[21] Communicating cross-culturally (4.76/5.00), relating with others cross-culturally (4.76,), collaborating with others/working with peers (4.41), speaking publicly/teaching (4.35).

[22] Additional survey highlights: Asked to rank their greatest KVS area of growth, students reported from highest to lowest, virtues (2.53/3.00), knowledge (1.88), and skills (1.59). 65% of respondents were business majors, 59% were male, while 94% were juniors or seniors at the time of the trip, and only 12% had never been on a "mission" trip prior to the experience.

[23] Total number of conference attendees and average ages are reflective of 2013 and 2014 conferences as well.

[24] In a village conference workshop, attendees were asked how many had ever used a budget. Only one man raised his hand.

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