Dr Louise Jenkins
Director Student Engagement
Monash University
Faculty of Education
Experiential learning in Initial Teacher Education courses: connecting the university learning to the professional space
Context

- unpredictable unsettled global situation
- pandemic, wars...shift online learning

- universities-responsibility-impactful learning experience and to engage students positively in their learning
- gaining employment
- navigating career successfully
Context

- education-crucial as we emerge from the pandemic and online learning
- students spend a lot of time in schools with teachers-belonging, comfort, certainty, positive future
Context

- teachers are extremely important
- how can ITE educators provide this impactful educational experience which will engage ITE students in their learning
- prepare them appropriately for their teaching profession
- support recovery from global events
- impact students’ learning in schools
Experiential Learning

- experiential learning—provide an impactful response
- practical implementation of authentic and real-life teaching and learning experiences
- bring theory and practical together in a meaningful way—impact planning and pedagogy
  - developed throughout first half twentieth century
  - ideas—Dewey, Lewin, Piaget, Jung and Freire
  - centre of learning is the experience
  - student centred
Experiential learning

experience is all that we have as human beings and is fundamental to learning…the way we know something is true is that it comes back to us and proves true in our experience (Kolb, 2012, What is experiential Learning?, William James, philosopher and psychologist, Harvard)

experience guides what we learn and also indicates to us when we have learned something (Kolb, 2012)

immerses students in experiences-encourages reflection-students actively engage-manage own learning transformative…encourage new knowledge, skills, competencies- that learning through theory or practice cannot achieve in isolation (Qualters, 2010).
Elements of Experiential Learning

Two approaches-implementation EL will be discussed in this session

- fieldtrips/living lab (Professor Williams)
- integration of EL learning and assessment within classroom settings (Dr Jenkins work in Music Method class)

- Other...
- professional-based or work-based learning
- programs for studying overseas
Context for Experiential Learning implementation

- Bachelor of Education (honours)/Master of Teaching
- Music Method classes
- aim-linking theory to practice-embedded in learning process

- artistic student-led project-developing a musical production
- no resources, no script, no music, no money
- education theme-important educational issue
  authentic context
  student centred, decision making about own learning, take initiative, flexible, unpredictable
Experiential Learning Cycles

- Kolb 1984
- Learning cycle

- Concrete experience
- Reflective observation
- Abstract conceptualisation
- Active experimentation
Experiential Learning Stages: artistic project

- **Stage 1**
  - the production work itself-music/composition, script, acting, singing, dancing, choreography, costumes, staging, marketing, rehearsal schedule (*concrete experience*)

- **Stage 2**
  - Journals and online forum posts in response to questions (*reflective observation*)

- **Stage 3**
  - Written piece-process and role, experiential learning, inclusive approaches to music education, real-life school situations/ context, Australian Professional Standards for Teaching (*abstract conceptualisation*)

- **Stage 4**
  - Professional placement in schools to test learning (*active experimentation*)
Two major outcomes from the EL process

- authenticity of the student-led artistic project
- team work, communication, process/planning, preparedness for teaching,
- transferability of skills and understanding into an imagined or current school context: interview readiness and employability
Online Experiential Learning-pivot 1

- never met
- rapport
- trust
- collegiality
On-campus to online-pivot 2

- unanticipated switch to online mid-semester
- already developed rapport and sense of belonging
- knew each other-less misinterpretation of others’ behaviour
Reinventing the EL project implementation

- re-thinking class time
- change to class structure and management
- break-out rooms
- outside of class time
- teacher trust
- time management-student led
- changed the skills required-technical skills
- changed the planning, development and implementation completely-new territory for everyone
How Experiential Learning supported these pivots

- student centredness
- flexibility catered for different challenges
- unpredictability of EL, unpredictability of pandemic
- changed the skills required-technical skills
- teacher already managing change and unpredictability in EL
Reinventing the EL project presentation

- individual videos on zoom
- separate singing tracks
- Brady Bunch set-up
- time delay
- instrumental performances-individual tracks
- choreography-plan and then separate implementation and filming
- Youtube Premiere
- pre-recorded
Experiential Learning implementation

● numerous challenges which the participants had to overcome

● Maria learnt how to do the “backstage, onstage, set designs...behind the scenes”

● Toby found that the “sketching it out and trying to figure out the logistics of how it was all going to happen” was “really amazing”
Connections to employability

- developed particular skills for the participants
- communication
- team-work
- persistence and commitment
- problem solving
- flexibility
- awareness of strengths and weaknesses
- willingness to help
Connections to employability

- Naomi-interview panels were extremely interested in her leadership role in the musical—demonstrated ‘leadership…motivation, team teaching’. Naomi and Lucy had been joint producer/directors for the production so had essentially team taught. Lucy claimed that the team-teaching aspect provided evidence that she was capable of working effectively with other teachers, which was something the panels were looking for.

- Sandy-interview experience impacted by the experiential learning
- “you…[are] able to say – look I actually did this thing…it’s practical evidence…I’ve already been there and done it and I understand it”
Connecting theory to practical: authenticity

- online teaching - connections to their professional work
- music in schools
- flexibility
- responding to change and uncertainty
- connecting online - communication and developing relationships
- common goal
- leadership roles - teacher’s hat
- replicated what they will experience in schools - uncertainty, online, disruption
- microcosm of wider social environment
Impact and purpose: Professor Williams and Dr Jenkins

- Sandy ‘it wasn’t just a couple of people doing a group assignment…it was actually a whole class situation which is obviously something you would be dealing with in a school as a teacher” (Dr Jenkins’ project)

- ‘Creating a passion among our students for the living environment’ (Living Lab, Professor Williams)
Looking forward…

- ‘post’-pandemic experiential learning-student centred develops independence and confidence-crucial now

- theory and practical-cope with any situation, wider perspective and understanding

- impact on professional development and independent learning, flexibility, relevance, skills…we all have experience…as an educator leverage this for positive outcomes
References


Discussion...

louise.jenkins@monash.edu