

Experiential Learning for Supporting Learning Effectiveness in Business Education: A Case Study from Egypt

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Abstract

Higher education plays a crucial role for developing responsible citizens and accordingly a key priority for educators should be how to prepare their students for contributing to society development. Traditional teaching methods have been insufficient to realize these aims and experiential learning has been recommended for supporting learning effectiveness in higher education as experiential learning plays a crucial role to complement the required capabilities. In business education, experiential learning has focused on the simulation of real world business practices. As experiential learning is a relatively new educational practical approach in Egypt, this study sheds the light on the rational process of experiential learning as well as the study aims to evaluate the benefits and obstacles that educators may face when implementing an experiential approach. The case study presents an experiential learning model based on a business simulation, reflecting its effectiveness to develop students' learning process and learning outcome. Using qualitative analysis, the study investigates the responses of diverse undergraduate student teams to a business simulation as a new experiential learning approach. The study recommends that experiential learning approach has proven useful for supporting the business students' effective learning.

Keywords: experiential learning, business education, business simulation, learning process, learning styles

1. Introduction

Along the expansion of globalization and the increasing demand for capable citizens supporting the economic development, higher education generally and in particular the business schools are increasingly developing new educational tools that can support their graduates to face the real challenges of the global business environment (Taras 2013, Buschlen 2013). Educators in higher education aim to provide the market with competent graduates who acquire the required skills and knowledge for working in diverse organizations. Educators in higher education aim as well to prepare capable future business leaders and successful entrepreneurs (Landreth, 2011). According to Piercy (2011), traditional teaching approach in business education is not enough for realizing these aims. Then providing experiential learning approaches as business simulations should be recommended as a constructive practical alternative (Piercy, 2011).

Experiential learning reflects the learning from past experiences and from participation (Wang, 2014). According to Carstea (2013), experiential learning approach is an effective teaching approach through which skills and capabilities are acquired and retained for a longer period of time, unlike traditional teaching approach as knowledge can be weakened gradually on the shorter term (Carstea, 2013). Experiential learning that requires students' engagement and involvement found to be a valuable mean to achieve such objectives in such challenging dynamic business environment (Devasagayam, 2012). Developing critical thinking skills for undergraduate business students is crucial to effectively operate in the global unpredictable marketplace (O'Boyle, 2014). Accordingly aside from the traditional teaching approach, universities are exerting more efforts through various initiatives and in various disciplines to improve critical thinking skills among students (Nargundkar, 2014). Business education has been exposed to a major shift from the passive traditional theoretical modes of learning to experiential learning approach which is based on learning by doing (Kozlinska, 2011). Experiential education has become an increasingly crucial area of research and practice as experiential learning approach can faster developing entrepreneurial skills. Simulation exercises in particular can achieve various objectives in the business education as students become more effectively able to apply theoretical concepts to

real world situations (Devasagayam 2012, Plesolanu 2013). Experiential learning is a relatively new educational approach in Egypt. Therefore, this study aims to shed the light on the rational process of experiential learning. This study intends also to explore and evaluate a contemporary experiential learning approach towards business education. Moreover, based on a case study at American University in Cairo AUC, this study provides qualitative analysis of various students' responses regarding the value of learning outcomes achieved through an experiential learning approach based on a business simulation.

• **Research Methods and Research Questions:** This study is an exploratory research based on a case study approach to demonstrate how experiential learning can be used for supporting learning effectiveness in business education. The research questions that guide this study are as follows:

- Can the experiential learning help students to effectively learn?
- Do the students like participating in the experiential learning?
- What are the benefits and challenges that educators may face when implementing experiential learning?
- What are the recommendations for effectively managing experiential learning?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Learning Levels and Styles

It is really important for educators to understand the various learning styles of their students to achieve higher learning effectiveness (Chen, 2014). As students have different preferences for receiving and processing information, Chen (1994) argued that the students may have problems in learning when their learning styles don't match the teaching styles of their instructors. That's why various learning styles have got recently a much growing attention (Chen, 2014). Bloom's Taxonomy is considered a basic reference regarding the various levels of learning. The first level of 'remembering' reflects the attainment of knowledge and the ability to recall it. The second level of 'applying' reflects the ability to explain what it means. The third level of 'analyzing' reflects the ability to apply the acquired knowledge. The next three levels of 'understanding, evaluating, and creating' reflect the critical thinking. Adult learners are more self-directed and more oriented to apply what they have learned. Educators then should select the right delivery method to reach this learning objective. Instead of focusing on remembering information and knowledge acquisition, the emphasis should shift to skill development. It is the duty of educators to create effective learning opportunities and to set a strategic approach for learning development as the traditional lecture method is not very effective for real learning to take place (Fulford, 2013). Students can have different styles of learning in different contexts and may prefer a particular style of learning. Kolb's learning styles form a scale that learners may move through over time and it can be linked to four styles of learning as follows:

- Convergent learning style reflects the learning skills characterized by active experimentation in order to test the theory in practice. The main strength is applying the ideas in practice as being useful for management positions within the firm. Convergers are less people oriented and more technically oriented.
- Divergent learning style reflects the learning skills characterized by creativity and imagination. The main strength is the imaginative ability and awareness of meanings and values. Divergers try to process information through observation and feeling.
- Assimilation learning style reflects the learning skills characterized by abstract conceptualization and reflective observation. The main strength is the ability to create theoretical models. Assimilators prefer to put the information into a simple and logical form requiring the construction of a model.
- Accommodative learning style reflects the learning skills characterized by taking risks and actions to adapt directly to changing circumstances. The main strength is the ability to engage in new experiences. Accommodators have the best chance to become successful entrepreneurs as they are receptive to new challenges and experiences (Chen, 2014, Carstea, 2013, Mobley, 2013).

Patterns associated with these four learning styles differ greatly from one individual to another based on combining five parameters as follows:

- Personality: learning styles vary from individual to individual depending on personality type. For example those who have extrovert personality are more oriented towards putting ideas into practice and will cope best in situations that call for generating alternative ideas or situations involving interpersonal relationships.

- Educational specialization: Early educational experiences contribute to individual learning styles formation, as students are focused on how to learn effectively as there is a strong relationship between individual learning styles and training methods used early in a particular discipline.
- Professional career: Career choice involves the exposure to a specialized learning environment and can form learning style habits that may occur in various situations of their duties due to the position occupied at work.
- Current job role: Requirements and job pressures tend to shape the orientation of a person's learning style such as the executive jobs as general management require a strong orientation toward making decisions in uncertain situations.
- The adaptability: Each task requires a set of skills for effective performance which require adaptability to acquire competences that fit the requirements of the job to enhance learning performance (Li 2013, Plesolanu 2013, Carstea 2013).

2.2 Experiential Learning

The experiential learning process is a method by which students learn from direct exposure as they are able to learn theory and apply it to practice in a way that enhances their critical thinking which can make it a much more powerful learning experience. Experiential learning was introduced by Kolb and it has been used in many different disciplines in particular where information technology is integrated (Chilton, 2012).

2.2.1 Experiential Learning: Theoretical Foundations

Based on Dewey's 'Theory of Experience 1938', experiential learning is defined by Kolb (1984) as "a process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience". This definition emphasizes the central role that experience can play in the learning process as involving the integrated functioning of thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. Kolb's experiential learning theory is one of the best known educational theories in higher education and it is considered one of the most continual theories regarding learning from experience (Li, 2013). According to Chavan (2011), experiential learning is "a process by which the learner creates meaning from direct experience, learning by doing or learning through an experience". Experiential learning then can reflect a variety of learning methods within higher education such as independent learning, learning by doing and problem based learning (Chavan, 2011). According to Li (2013), both acquiring and transforming the experience are two vital basic processes for experiential learning (Li, 2013). Experiential learning reveals the accumulation of knowledge and experience through analysis and reflection for better practice. The students then must engage in four activities, as components of an assignment, to be classified as an experiential learning that should involve concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Plesolanu 2013, Mobley 2013). A concrete experience requires students to process responses and consequences through their senses, while reflective observation requires students to remember aspects of the project and elaborating on the experiences. The application of theoretical principles to what they observe reflect the abstract conceptualization aspect of experiential learning. In this phase, students apply processes and problem solving. As for the active experimentation, students must use trial and error to solve problems and may reach innovative solutions. The experiential learning process represents a learning cycle where the students can touch all the required essential bases which allow the students to actively learn and practice (Chavan 2011, Taras, 2013). Kolb's experiential learning theory has been accepted as an efficient model of learning as it provides comprehensible mechanism of teaching to improve student learning (Chavan, 2011). According to Cornell (2013), Experiential learning involves a "direct encounter with the phenomena being studied rather than merely thinking about the encounter, or only considering the possibility of doing something about it" (Cornell, 2013). The Traditional learning relies basically on lecturing and classroom based methods, but experiential learning actively involves the students in a concrete experience (Cornell, 2013). According to Weisbord (2013), clear and specific feedback is important for effective learning. Experiential learning takes place when the student is involved in an activity, then evaluates it and determines what was useful to remember and also uses this information to perform better another activity (Weisbord 2013, Kolb 1984). Actually, lots of researchers had confirmed Kolb's work as students learn much better through active experiences. According to Kozloski (2013), experiential learning activities should involve for the learners three main elements "go real, go deep and get feedback", which are reflecting the opportunity to be self directed, the chance to connect to real world environments and to reflect critically the leaning experience (Kozloski, 2013). According to Plesolanu (2013), learning is not the same for everyone as it differs individually based on various personal characteristics and experiences. Moreover, it appears that experiential learning reflects a process including four successive interrelated stages which are "concrete experience, observation, generalization and application (Plesolanu, 2013).

According to Kolb's theory, the prompt base of adult learning is to practice. Learning is created through concrete experiences which can be considered the base for the second stage of current knowledge's reflective observations and consideration of different perspectives related to the experience. The third stage is moving forward to finding a conceptual frame for the studied situation as a base for the fourth stage which is the implementation and active experimentation. In other words, it is applying the new gained information and capabilities in other new situations which is in turn activating another cycle of learning (Rosenblatt 2013, Mobley 2013, Plesolanu 2013). Therefore, to reach optimal learning during the learning experience, learners should have an adequate balance of these four stages. According to Kolb, learners should first detect knowledge. Yet to complete the learning process, a construction phase should take place for transforming the acquired knowledge through experiencing this knowledge to a model (Chavan 2011, Carstea 2013). Experiential learning can take place in a variety of settings and notably it often occurs within experiential education. Rose (2012) defines simply the experiential education as "the intentional use of activity by an educator to teach students". This definition is confirming criticizing the traditional lecturing education. The teacher is then a main part of the experiential educational process who should be empowering students to create their own meanings and their own interpretations of knowledge. Therefore experiential education must be created, developed, and implemented into practice (Rose, 2012). According to Mobley (2013), the matching between learning context and learning style enhances learning performance. However, since learning styles vary across students, learning then can be improved when instructors are aware of these differences to develop more productive students by encouraging their creative thinking (Chen 2014, Mobley 2013). Although some researchers maybe still looking for adjusting Kolb's 1970 theory, yet this theory can still be perceived as a simple credible model that can be easily applied for various specializations and for business education in particular (Chavan, 2011).

2.2.2 Experiential Learning for Business Education

Experiential learning has long been an integral feature of education in various specializations such as medicine or other health sciences. In particular, Kolb's approach has been often used for developing and evaluating experiential learning activities in business education (Kozloski, 2013). According to Taras (2013), experiential learning approaches tackle the criticism of business education as being theoretical or passive as well as incapable to develop business students who should be able to face the practical challenges of the real world (Taras, 2013). Yet, it is not the norm in business education to have students who are practicing their skills under the support and guidance of experienced instructors or practitioners (Kozloski, 2013). Recently, there is a growing tendency to incorporate experiential learning activities in business education in order to meet employers' expectations for students' required capabilities and also to engage business students who already changed remarkably in the past ten years as they are considered the 'YouTube Student Generation' who are more self confident, more adaptable to change and more oriented to new technologies. Moreover, the 'YouTube Student Generation' prefers learning through real life experiences and not oriented toward the traditional remembering textbook based learning. In fact, the business students from this generation seek much more innovations as they are continuously connected to the real world through social media as Twitter and Facebook. Accordingly, business students nowadays are so different from prior generations and they then need to learn differently than prior generations. They need experiential learning that provides more practical experiences and additional interactions with advanced technology. To support business students' success in the real business world, students should be directly involved in the real business world through greater levels of involvement in various practical applications. That's why business schools have recently actively integrating experiential learning in business programs to confirm the educational practice (Buschlen 2013, Kozloski 2013). According to Cornell (2013), traditional approaches may be complemented by experiential learning. Accordingly, business educators, at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, are continually looking for effective teaching tools that provide dynamic learning activities for their students (Cornell, 2013). Yet the students' receptiveness to new or old educational teaching approaches varies as different students require different learning styles (Piercy, 2011). However, there was a general support for integrating experiential learning approaches in business education as being effective with various set of business students, which is then promoting currently the excessive using of experiential activities. According to Piercy (2011), the traditional teaching approach may remain the main way of business education, but it should be crucially complemented with experiential exercises (Piercy, 2011).

2.2.2.1 Experiential learning for Business Education: Positive Aspects - Opportunities and Benefits

Experiential learning can be considered an effective methodology for self education as it has lots of advantages to improve skills and professional performance (Plesolanu, 2013). Experiential learning has been acknowledged as a basic approach towards helping others to learn (Chavan, 2011). According to Kozloski (2013), "one must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it - you have no certainty until you try it". Prior to

graduation especially for undergraduate and graduate level business students, acquiring practical experience is crucial which can be very challenging for business schools that should be integrating the experiential learning to avoid passive learning as well as to support the development of professional critical thinking. Experiential learning in business education intends to provide students the opportunity to meet potential employers' expectations as it can bridge the gap between employers' expectations and business school graduates' required competencies (Kozloski, 2013). According to Brennan (2014), experiential learning has become more popular in business education as it responds to the changing competitive environment of higher education which requires the students to acquire more employability skills to be prepared for careers (Brennan, 2014). According to Carstea (2013), experiential learning has a number of advantages for acquiring higher professional performance as motivation to learn is much higher when learning is active, reflective and participatory (Carstea, 2013). On the other hand, Glick (2013) argues that although case studies maybe the dominant form of experiential learning in many business courses, still students just express what they would do but not doing something themselves. Moreover, role plays or simulations may extract behavior in artificial contexts but still with limited complexity and are conducted in classrooms along the class schedule. Yet, Glick (2013) confirms that these experiential learning activities still are very useful for energizing students (Glick, 2013). Experiential learning offers opportunities for effective and active learning strategies that cannot be found in the traditional lectures contexts. Accordingly in business education, it is really important to integrate experiential learning to motivate self directed learning and enhance the students' critical thinking (Nargundkar 2014, Daneshyar 2011). Participating in experiential learning can support students to develop their skills and to acquire job experience, which in turn can provide them as well a competitive advantage for winning employment opportunity after graduation (Chavan, 2011). According to Chavan (2011), experiential learning can also support students' motivation towards challenging concepts by clarifying how the knowledge can be applied in reality. Moreover, experiential learning activities have been revealed to improve the overall students' performance and grades (Chavan, 2011). Lefebvre (2013) argues that entrepreneurship education uses mainly experiential learning to develop students' critical thinking skills, through involving them in direct experience such as launching business startups or developing business plans (Lefebvre, 2013). Experiential learning allows students to explore their knowledge and also to develop their ability to investigate the unknown, accept uncertainty and to build their self confidence (Lefebvre, 2013). According to Taras (2013), lots of studies have confirmed the effectiveness of experiential learning in business education (Taras, 2013). Even for non-business major students, experiential learning is still crucial to relate business concepts to their different backgrounds and majors (Landreth, 2011). As a result of globalization, experiential learning becomes necessary in business education due to the competitive environment as experiential learning activities enhance students' self confidence through learning how to apply and to relate the theoretical concepts to real world settings. In turn, students can be more successful on their professional levels (Kozloski, 2013, Chavan, 2011). According to Kozloski (2013), through experiential learning activities, students can put into practice the business concepts that they learned which can strengthen their competencies to make better decisions in the real business world. Moreover, the cooperative teamwork experiential learning activities can support teamwork spirit and it can develop as well the students' joint problems solving abilities. The students can also learn to respect other teams' various opinions and perspectives (Kozloski, 2013). Experiential learning applications may take various forms in business education such as developing business plans, initiating venture startups, interviewing booming entrepreneurs, internships, simulations or field studies, all of which can be used to apply business concepts to real world contexts. Accordingly, many researchers confirm that integrating experiential learning into business curriculum can improve the various students' skills such as critical thinking, time management, interpersonal communications, creativity and decision making (Knotts 2011, Warren 1997, Rose 2012, Kozloski 2013). According to Redpath (2012), experiential learning can accommodate various modes of delivery, assuring that traditional teaching face to face interactions is no longer suitable. Redpath (2012) argues as well that a significant advantage for online learning is providing interactive information sharing of various perspectives among diverse instructors and students through sharing continuously various experiences (Redpath, 2012). In turn, business educators shouldn't perceive the experiential learning as a second instructional method because employers are actually more looking for the business students' graduates who acquire practical analytical abilities. Experiential learning activities can support students' skills to set strategic plans and goals through teamwork, participation and learning analytical techniques as the students can experience and they are not just memorize concepts. Then, the experiential learning can place the students into real life work environment and guide students to examine various sources beyond the concepts that they cover in the classical lectures (Devasagayam, 2012). According to Chilton (2012), experiential learning can be much favorable than the traditional classroom learning setting as it is enhancing much more the participation and collaboration because students' interaction is not constrained to the set classroom hours. As time management is a challenge,

students can then plan their time to meet their other classes' expectations which will better prepare them as well for dealing after graduation with the real various complex activities (Chilton, 2012). According to Vohra (2015), experiential learning in business education offer many advantages over traditional classroom lectures such as promoting active learning engagement, breaking the classical models of thinking, and enhancing team spirit, trust and group awareness (Vohra,2015). Yet, the benefits of experiential learning activities can be maximized if students have self confidence in their abilities. Moreover, it is recommended to evaluate early at the beginning the students' skills and capabilities to achieve a greater performance. It is advisable then to start early the experiential learning orientation since middle school to be a professional base for business education (Plesolanu 2013, Cornell 2013). The inability of many business students to relate theories to practice sheds the light on the importance of experiential learning activities which intend to build students' practical experiences (Piercy, 2011).

Although experiential learning can effectively support the business students to approach potential careers and to acquire self confidence, yet experiential learning may be an intimidating or a scary approach for both instructors and students.

2.2.2.2 Experiential learning for Business Education: Negative Aspects - Barriers and Disadvantages

Although the literature generally confirms that experiential learning is an essential part in business education, yet there is still a debate among educators about its convenience (Chavan, 2011). Experiential learning activities require from both instructors and students totally different creative contributions than traditional approaches in order to encourage and to enhance their mutual interactions (Piercy 2011, Cornell, 2013). A main barrier to experiential learning can be the students' feelings of incompetence. According to Cornell (2013), business students may not be willing to engage in experiential learning activities if they perceive it exceeding their abilities. Then, increasing the students' self-efficacy is crucial and required for acquiring the experiential learning activities (Cornell, 2013). In fact, to gain much more from experiential learning activities, there should be a real willingness from the students to be actively involved in such activities, adding to provide the students the opportunity for implementing their new ideas acquired from such experiences (Cornell, 2013). However, if the experiential learning activities are new or very complicated, the students may feel fear due to the perceived complexity, as being unprepared to participate, especially for freshman students who are enrolled in introductory courses (Cornell, 2013). According to Brennan (2014), the resistance to experiential learning from undergraduate business students also arises because of the uncertainty they perceive regarding the experiential learning activities' assessment processes or methods. Experiential learning approach entails offering slightest guidance for the students as it assumes that knowledge should be acquired through experience. In turn if it is optional, the students will try to avoid experiential learning and will much prefer the predictable traditional learning methods (Brennan, 2014). In spite of the growing popularity of online communication and social networking, still online business education is not broadly accepted because of the various concerns related to its learning effectiveness, the quality of providers or the methods of teaching (Redpath, 2012). That's why instructors may be reluctant to integrate online learning into their courses' academic structures. Moreover, online business schools may face main obstacles to meet criteria for business school accreditation or even to participate in media ranking which is based mainly on traditional face to face learning approaches. According to Redpath (2012), business schools that rely basically only on the online programs or just experiential learning may face a real difficulty to get accreditation that's why most of them prefer to focus on traditional classroom teaching (Redpath, 2012). However, many comparative studies argue that students still learn effectively through online learning as they do in the traditional face to face learning approaches and sometimes even they may learn more effectively in business education through online learning (Redpath, 2012). The interactions between students and instructors in online learning are different than in the traditional learning as students have more responsibility for initiating participation over the learning activities. According to Redpath (2012), the barriers to experiential learning can be overcome when there is a high degree of interaction and collaboration between students and instructors, adding to setting the appropriate course design and teaching approaches to meet the intended learning objectives for business students (Redpath, 2012). According to Chilton (2012), experiential learning may increase the workload for the instructors as experiential learning may require more planning and organization to guide students for understanding what they are supposed to do. For the university, finding the experienced outdoor educators may present a challenge as well (Chilton, 2012). Experiential learning requires an experiential educator who is able to help initiate and report students' learning experiences and achievements (Rose, 2012). Kozlinska (2011) argues that there are still lots of barriers facing the experiential learning such as the lack of required instructors' information or skills, adding to the lack of cooperation between business academic universities and business labor sectors. Moreover, a main challenge for universities is to shift the teaching ideology from traditional passive approach of learning to experiential learning approach (Kozlinska, 2011).

Unfortunately, the negative perceptions and misinformation still prevail regarding experiential learning, which is in turn rooting the persistence of both instructors and students' resistance and their more preference for the traditional classroom delivery. This study intends to shed the light on the benefits of experiential learning approach for both business students and educators to be more open minded toward the importance of such experiential learning approach.

2.2.3 Experiential learning for Business Education: Business Simulation

In business education, experiential learning approaches have focused on using in the classroom the simulations of real world business practices. In fact, simulation activities can achieve lots of objectives in business education and have proven useful much better than traditional lectures settings for supporting the students to connect theoretical knowledge to application (Piercy, 2011). Business simulations support the students to experience the real business passion as a good basis of learning, adding to supporting intergroup and interpersonal concerns such as teamwork, communication or conflict resolution (Clercq 2000, Vohra, 2015, Piercy, 2011). Although required skills and competencies may not be well supported in current traditional educational systems, yet the research works on educational simulations or games was almost missing before year 2006. Actually business simulation can recreate the real management situations as students can experiment while learning the different decisions, to fail and try again as well as to recognize the consequences of their decisions. Business Simulation can also promote higher level of thinking much more than the traditional knowledge acquirement which is in turn developing skills for anticipating future problems and solving them. Bliemel (2014) recommends encouraging instructors of business courses to learn how to utilize successfully business simulations (Bliemel, 2014). According to Berte (2014), educators should ensure that students are acquiring the education that is applicable in the real work environment, that's why the use of the business simulation expose effectively the students to a learning process to experience and to observe the real context. Although business simulation may require extra preparation for training and logistical work, yet it is worthy effort as students have reported that the simulation exercises is a valuable learning experience (Berte, 2014). According to Taneja (2014), business simulation can effectively enhance the students' critical thinking, communication, and teamwork which in turn can support more the achievement of the course intended learning outcomes. Students' participation in business simulation exercises can provide them more motivation for learning (Taneja, 2014). Compared to traditional learning approach, business simulation exercises develop students' analytical skills by actively enhancing learning by practicing. However, educators unfortunately may perceive business simulation as requiring more efforts and it is a time consuming. According to Gee (2003), the center of effective learning through the business simulation is the students' participation. Then, it is crucial to strongly engage effectively the students in active discussions (Gee, 2003). Moreover, to support students to progress in business simulation exercises, Bliemel (2014) recommends clarifying to students that there is no problem to fail at the business simulation, as long as students can demonstrate both the reasons of the failure and the acquired learning from their mistakes to avoid the failure later in reality. Then this would require accordingly not assigning high grades to the final business simulation score, but grades should be assigned to the students' ability to demonstrate their learning (Bliemel, 2014). Through business simulation, students can enhance their self efficacy, their capability to work in teams, to be exposed to diversity of ideas or people and also to develop their critical thinking skills, all of which are very valuable for business students to be prepared and to get ready for real workplace environment (Whalen 2014, Holtzblatt 2011, Kozloski, 2013). Although business simulation is useful for developing students' participation, teamwork spirit and ability to apply business theories, yet still the existing literature that is recommending the use of business simulation can reflect just the subjective evidence. In turn, more investigation of various experiential learning models, as the business simulation, is required to be extended across diverse students (Piercy, 2011).

The following case study presents an experiential learning model based on a business simulation, reflecting its effectiveness to develop students' learning process to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Using qualitative analysis, the study investigates the responses of diverse teams of undergraduate students to a business simulation as a new experiential learning approach.

3. Case Study: Business Simulation at American University in Cairo AUC

Using qualitative analysis, the case study examines the responses of 144 undergraduate students who were enrolled in the four sections of course 'Introduction to Business' at American University in Cairo AUC along one academic year (two semesters: Fall 2015 - Spring 2016).

The 144 undergraduate students have been divided into twenty four teams, as each group of six students has been allocated randomly to form one team. The twenty four teams are representing the diverse teams of undergraduate

students who were exposed to a business simulation that was integrated in the course ‘Introduction to Business’ at AUC along one academic year. The case study reports the results of the twenty four teams’ acquired learning outcomes and their satisfactions regarding the business simulation as a new experiential learning approach.

3.1 Introduction to Business Course: Description and Intended Learning Outcomes

The course ‘Introduction to Business’ (course code: BADM 203/2001) is an introductory course for students, with no prior knowledge in business, who are looking for majoring or minoring in ‘Business or Entrepreneurship’. The introductory course provides a practical integrated overview of the profession business study. The course demonstrates the nature of entrepreneurship and business organization as well as their roles in society and economy. The course also covers all the business functions including management, marketing, operations, accounting, finance, human resources management and information systems. Moreover, the course illustrates the four basic functions of a manager as planning, organizing, leading and controlling, along emphasizing the importance of ethical and corporate social responsibility (AUC, 2016).

3.2 The Experiential Learning Approach: An overview of Capsim Business Simulation

Capsim business simulation provides the students a good opportunity of a real world experience to completely manage a business and to understand how each department should interact with each other to achieve effectively business goals. The thirty six students in each of the four sections of the course are divided into six teams in each section and each team should be in charge of a multi-million dollar company that manufactures and sells electronic sensors. Although there is an increasing demand for the sensors, competitors in the market manage similar companies. Each team of six students should represent the management team of a \$40 million corporation in the market. At the beginning of the simulation and in each section of the course, the six competing companies start all with the same financial market status. However, as soon as the competition starts, the decisions of each team will determine whether the growing of the company or its failure. To implement a good strategy, each team of students is responsible to manage and coordinate four key departments: research and development, marketing, production, and finance. First of all to decide the right strategy, the students are required to do analysis of the industry, the customer buying requirements, the competitors, the company’s strengths and weaknesses, adding to the growing size of the market itself. Once each team completes analysis and sets a strategy, each team then should play various roles as managers for making various decisions for the four departments in the company using the online interface. In R&D department, the students invent and review as they decide what new products will be introduced to the market, and how they can improve the existing products as well. In Marketing department, the students ensure selling what they produce, as they decide product’s price, budgets for awareness and accessibility adding to sales forecast for the following year. In Production department, the students decide the production schedule regarding how many sensors to be produced, they can also create production lines up to five new products, and also they can sell old production lines or improve the plant by increasing automation or capacity. In Finance department, the students make sure having the required money through issuing more stocks or borrowing long or short term debt or even retiring stocks or bonds if they have a good cash flow. To make right decisions, the students have access to practice reading and analyzing a set of financial statements proforma (Balance Sheet, Income Statement and Cash flow statement). The financial statements proforma are recalculated with every decision that the students make to test the feasibility of their strategic ideas. Capsim business simulation can accordingly provide the students a good opportunity to manage a company through a competitive environment (Capsim, 2016).

3.3 The Experiential Learning Approach: Benefits of Capsim Business Simulation

As a powerful learning tool based on experiencing how business works in practice, students can develop through Capsim business simulation an understanding of basic business principles in an engaging deep ongoing learning experience which is not just based on memorizing knowledge in theory as used to be in the traditional classroom learning setting (Foundation, 2016). Through Capsim business simulation, students can integrate theory and practice to grasp how the various departments of a business can impact each other as well as impact the entire organization. The students can experience running a business in a competitive marketplace without facing the real world risk (Foundation, 2016). Beyond the traditional classroom learning setting, Capsim business simulation is an engaging interactive students’ experience. Through a simple user friendly online interface, the students can also get immediate feedback with answers when they need them (Foundation, 2016). Through Capsim business simulation, the students work successfully in teams for eight successive rounds as a simulation of eight years of business work. Each team is required to submit a mid simulation report adding to a final presentation to debrief their experiential learning experience through the business simulation game. Throughout

the semester academic period, students meet regularly according to a set schedule with their professors for lecturing or class discussions about their progress or any challenges that they face about the simulation and for also learning key concepts or theories and how to be applied for making better decisions in the four departments of their companies along the business simulation game.

3.4 The Experiential Learning Approach: Students Response to Capsim Business Simulation at AUC

Using qualitative analysis, the case study investigates the response that was gathered from diverse undergraduate students regarding the business simulation as a new experiential learning approach. Qualitative data was gathered from a total of 144 undergraduate students who were enrolled in the four sections of course 'Introduction to Business' at AUC along one academic year (Fall 2015 - Spring 2016). The students in each section were divided into six teams who were entitled: *Andrews, Baldwin, Chester, Digby, Erie and Ferris*.

| Total of 144 students | Semester | Semester | Semester | Semester |
|-------------------------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|
| = | Fall 2015 | Fall 2015 | Spring 2016 | Spring 2016 |
| 6 Teams in each section | SEC 04 | SEC 07 | SEC 07 | SEC 08 |
| 6 Students in each team | | | | |

In the evaluation report of the business simulation, each team was required to answer four basic questions regarding the experiential learning process that they experienced along the business simulation as follows:

- You have managed your 40 million dollar company and you have experienced disappointments and pleasant surprises. You have gained experience in how to run a company and how to balance decisions in various functions such as 'R&D, Production, Marketing and Finance'. You are starting to figure out how to make all this work together to support your competitive strategy. You have an exciting story to tell! Use the following questions as a guide to the content of your report.

3.4.1 What were your expectations about the simulation before you started to work on it? What did you expect to learn? Which of your expectations were met? Why? Or why not?

| Teams | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Spring 2016 | Semester Spring 2016 |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | / | / | / | / |
| | SEC 04 | SEC 07 | SEC 07 | SEC 08 |
| Andrews | "Before working on the simulation we had the feeling that it was going to be extremely tough...We were expecting to learn how to manage a company, time management and teamwork ...Honestly we learned a lot of that through the simulation" | "The simulation was like what we expected...at first we thought it was an easy process but we discovered to be so much more complicated....We learned that we have to meet often and learn from previous mistakes.. Overall it is fun educational process and we don't find it as intimidating as before" | "We expected to understand the dynamics of the company...overall our expectations were met...The simulation did provide us the proper tools to better understand how any business works and what is expected from various departments" | "We expected the simulation to be challenging and to learn a lot about managing a company...Fortunately most of our expectations were met" |
| Baldwin | "We expected it to be very difficult and hard to keep track of all the decisions being made and how they affected each other...We expected to learn organization skills, taking risks, how to spend money wisely, how to come up with a strategy and just essentially how to run a business... Our expectations were met because the simulation | "This was the first time to ever experience something like that and we were very excited about the simulation...We were very eager to gain the experience of what a real company goes through in its everyday operations...All our expectations were met...We learned how real companies operate and this is much more | "We thought it would be difficult to handle....We expected to learn how to run our business and maintain it and we were able to learn it" | "We expected to go through the ups and downs of what a real life business may encounter within the business worldAll our expectations were met" |

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| | <i>is very complicated at the start but as we got the hang of it... It became much easier"</i> | <i>effective than simply studying and getting asked questions on the exams"</i> | | |
| Chester | <i>"Our team expected that it was going to be fun and to learn what the real business in the outside world really look like....and most of our expectations were met"</i> | <i>"We expected the simulation to be more sophisticated... not logical as it is ...We did indeed learned how to read the market needs....The simulation is a smaller version of how real life will be in the future"</i> | <i>"We expected it to be harder but also entertaining...We expected to learn how to plan and how to manage various departments...Our expectations were met"</i> | <i>"We expected to learn what each department is responsible for and how to manage our business as a whole... All of our expectations were met and it was actually more challenging than we thought it would be"</i> |
| Digby | <i>"We expected it to be quite easy and straightforward but it did prove harder than expected...Most of our expectations were met in terms of learning how to run our business and compete in a market"</i> | <i>"We expected it to be much harder but still it is not so easy...We expected to learn and have better knowledge regarding real business ...We learned how to make major decisions and our expectations were met to a great extent"</i> | <i>"Our expectations frankly were not very high but we realized how extremely it is beneficial"</i> | <i>"We expected it would be easy but we were shocked by the great effort we need to do....We expected to learn the basics of business practically and we met most of our expectations"</i> |
| Erie | <i>"Our expectations were that this course is going to be more practical just like a real life experience....What makes this course much more interesting is the competition as every group wants to be the winner...Honestly all our expectations were met ...This course is very unique and enjoyable to each one of us"</i> | <i>"We expected the simulation to be easy ...However we found it not an easy task ...We also expected to learn how actual business can run and this expectation was met"</i> | <i>"We expected it to be a hard task but our expectations to learn were met even more than we wished for"</i> | <i>"We expected it to be very hard but we were able to learn a lot...It made us more aware of what decisions we should make"</i> |
| Ferris | <i>"We expected a great challenge to win in the simulation and we expected to face obstacles to understand and implement our strategy correctly....but what happened was that every mistake taught us something that made us stronger ...It is even more challenging than we expected because each team went with different strategies ...So keeping up with each competitor was such a hard task"</i> | <i>"The simulation has been a rollercoaster ride in which we experienced many success and many loses...We expected to learn how to manage different aspects of a business ...We expected it to be complicated but we found it simple yet challenging enough to keep us interested ...It met our learning expectations"</i> | <i>"We expected to learn how departments should be managed and how to overcome problems, planning and organizing our information ...Our expectations were met adding to improve our negotiation skills as team members"</i> | <i>"We expected a fun learning experience and this expectation was definitely met and we gained a broad knowledge of how business really works"</i> |

3.4.2 What were the most beneficial aspects of your simulation work? What aspects did you enjoy the most?

| Teams | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Spring 2016 | Semester Spring 2016 |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <i>/</i> | <i>/</i> | <i>/</i> | <i>/</i> |
| | SEC 04 | SEC 07 | SEC 07 | SEC 08 |
| Andrews | <i>"The most beneficial aspect is striving to take the best decisions regarding our business... It helps</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspect was that it enabled us to observe the</i> | <i>"The main benefit was the fact that we were able to gain real life business experience.</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspect was the experience of a</i> |

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| | <i>us experience how decisions are made in real life and how to react and adapt to new situations...We learned collaboration and how to deal with different opinions within our group...We learned how to make right decisions and working efficiently as a team"</i> | <i>business world for the first time...We leavened crucial aspects as decisions, forecasting and analyzing competitors actions....It helped us to improve our group work skills"</i> | <i>Working in a group allowed us to enhance our leadership and communication skills ...What we enjoyed the most is seeing the results of our efforts"</i> | <i>loss ...It served us to learn taking more care of our decisions and to learn from our mistakes...We enjoyed learning without harming our real company and without losing our real money"</i> |
| Baldwin | <i>"The most beneficial aspects are how to read competitors strategiesAlso working as a team as all of us want to always win and sustain our company...So we gained the business sense and knowing when to be aggressive and when to be highly risk averse...We enjoyed it"</i> | <i>"The simulation had many beneficial aspects as it helped us learn how to understand a business, how to try achieve our goals and most importantly how to work in a team"</i> | <i>"We learned a lot and we enjoyed it.....We enjoyed the feeling of owning our own company and the competitive atmosphere in the classroom"</i> | <i>"We learned working with the teams and learning how to deal with a harsh environment and managing deadlines"</i> |
| Chester | <i>"It was a very good opportunity to approach the world of business in such a practical way and has enabled us to dig deep into the most significant multiple departments that exist in business ...Also working as a team always has enabled us to make many decisions that couldn't have been done by anyone of us alone"</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspect is the skill of reading numbers and knowing the functions of each department...We did enjoy knowing the impact of the changes we did and how each decision affected other departments"</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspect is to know how to run a company and how all the departments are integrated...We really enjoyed it"</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspect is to learn how to manage successfully a business...We enjoyed being flexible to deal with the constant changes in the market"</i> |
| Digby | <i>"Working in a group helped us to learn how to interact with each other to achieve a common goal ...The simulation shows us what can happen to our business plan and how to make decisions to keep our profit level as high as possibleThe most aspect we had enjoyed is learning from mistakes ...We are very glad that we had the chance to do these mistakes in the simulation instead of real life"</i> | <i>"The most beneficial thing is learning how to deal with different departments in a business...It is good to learn from our mistakes without losing any money"</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspect is the practical learning as we are really managing a company.....We enjoyed competing with other students which is giving us insight on how real life market competition is like"</i> | <i>"We had a great background on business ...It was an opportunity for us to be introduced to the business world...We enjoyed our exposure to a fake world which is greatly similar to the real business world"</i> |
| Erie | <i>"The simulation is very helpful yet entertaining project that will provide us with a unique set of experience in starting our careers...Every single detail in the game is beneficial in its way....It taught us how to make effective and efficient decisions and it brought us to be friends as we have been sitting a lot together talking and thinking ...We have mastered the idea of teamwork ...We really enjoyed the idea of owning a multi</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspect is how the whole team works together to produce the right products and compete with the other teams...Thus we were able to enhance our decisions to achieve our goal of perfection"</i> | <i>"We enjoyed sharing our opinions together...Understanding things that weren't present in our minds from the first place and getting to know more people more closely"</i> | <i>"We learned how to develop our skills to try include all aspects of a decision ...We enjoyed making profit ...that made us all happy"</i> |

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| | <i>million dollars company and to manage it as real life experience"</i> | | | |
| Ferris | <i>"We enjoyed how taking decisions in simulation is so close to real business decisions....It felt like real work...It was fun noticing how other teams respond to changes as we respond vice versa"</i> | <i>"The work we did has been very beneficial in the process of understanding what a business is...How to manage business and how to make decisions...The most enjoyable part was that it helps us put our thoughts into action without the risks of real life"</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspects were learning how to run a real business helping us become effective business leaders in a fun and engaging way...We learn by trial and error instead of just reading or memorizing"</i> | <i>"The most beneficial aspects were knowing how to work together as a team and trying to come up with best results for our company....we enjoyed working together"</i> |

3.4.3 What were the most disappointing aspects of your simulation work? How could these disappointments have been avoided?

| Teams | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Spring 2016 | Semester Spring 2016 |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | <i>/</i> | <i>/</i> | <i>/</i> | <i>/</i> |
| | SEC 04 | SEC 07 | SEC 07 | SEC 08 |
| Andrews | <i>"The most disappointing aspect was we didn't manage our work well enough... We could have done better in time management but we were facing some difficulties as getting harder and the competition was getting fiercer...We could have avoided by meeting more often and giving more time and effort to develop more better strategies"</i> | <i>"The most disappointing issues were that our expectations were not accurate as expected...If we had focused more on developing strategic plan we could have improved our performance"</i> | <i>"The most disappointing aspects were the decisions made that turned out to negatively affecting our company's profitability... We could avoided it by heading to a professional for help that would have prevented several difficulties"</i> | <i>"The most disappointing aspects were not many ... Mostly it was because we couldn't to find a place or a date to suit each of our team but we managed to overcome this challenge by our commitment"</i> |
| Baldwin | <i>"We have started the simulation with a major disappointment which is getting emergency loan...but we learned through rounds that we need to be more careful"</i> | <i>"A disappointing aspect was trying to avoid bad performance relative to our competitors...but it was considered a challenge that motivated us to think more wisely to perform better"</i> | <i>"As a team we have faced many obstacles and miscommunications.....but important key of success is using our failure to learn a lesson and to also overcome these obstacles and to turn them to success"</i> | <i>"Weak understanding of finance department which sets us back drastically ... but we tried to focus more to get more understanding and analysis of provided information"</i> |
| Chester | <i>"The most disappointing aspect was the degrading of our team spirit because of the different personality traits and different capabilities of studying and working but we offered assistance to each others to overcome this problem...The simulation and competition was hard and that disappointed us a bit"</i> | <i>"The most disappointing aspect is that we did not know what the competitors did and whether they were improving or not until the results were out"</i> | <i>"The disappointment is that reality will be much more complicated.....More factors should be taken in consideration while taking the decisions"</i> | <i>"It is very tricky to assume what other competitors will do ... Hence such disappointments guided us for doing our best to reach our goal...We learn by trial and error ...Hence to avoid repeating the same mistakes"</i> |
| Digby | <i>"Our products' sales were not high enough to bring us a lot of profit ... Most enjoyable aspect is</i> | <i>"The disappointment aspect is that there are more factors that affect the</i> | <i>"Our disappointment was minimal as we got good results ...but it helps us</i> | <i>"Our great disappointing aspect that the simulation was somehow going by</i> |

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| | <i>the idea of not repeating the same mistakes...With every error, we make sure as a group to analyze it carefully and looking for other ways to develop our products"</i> | <i>decisions in real world"</i> | <i>work harder and to be more creative"</i> | <i>luck...We tried to avoid it by doing our best taking the decisions hoping the results would be fair"</i> |
| Erie | <i>"The most disappointing aspect is the difference between expected results and actual results and getting emergency loan... This could have been avoided by ensuring that we always had extra cash on hand ...We also got problem in sales forecast and we used to get stock out this could have been avoided by being more precise regarding our calculations... Most of our disappointments could have been avoided by analyzing our competitors' decisions"</i> | <i>"The most disappointing aspect comes at the time of results as getting very low profit.... By practicing a lot as a team we were able to avoid many disappointments"</i> | <i>"The disappointment was mainly being not successful but we overcame this by sharing previous business knowledge and by trying to master the use of the decisions that were covered in class"</i> | <i>"We disappointed when we find a company introducing a new product and we didn'tWe feel like we face more competition that we cannot challenge ourselves but we did more efforts"</i> |
| Ferris | <i>"During the first rounds we were still not fully prepared to handle the simulation which made it very hard to make right decisions ...Leading to lots of mistakes and disappointing results...This could have been avoided if all team members had understood and worked together as we lacked cooperation and each one of us had a different strategy in mind"</i> | <i>"There was nothing really disappointing about the simulation...Overall it was a great experience"</i> | <i>"Our disappointments were related to our strategies that didn't work well...We believe that this could overcome with better forecasting and better teamwork"</i> | <i>"It took us time to learn how to work to get good results... This could have been avoided by focusing more in class"</i> |

3.4.4How well did you work within your team? Explain any teamwork problems you experienced and how you have attempted to solve them.

| Teams | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Fall 2015 | Semester Spring 2016 | Semester Spring 2016 |
|----------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| | SEC 04 | SEC 07 | SEC 07 | SEC 08 |
| Andrews | <i>"As a team we worked very well together and understood each other... The main problem was the fact that we didn't meet together a lot as everyone has different schedules and timings but we agreed to meet twice per week to work on the simulations"</i> | <i>"We had many communication problems and barriers at first...We didn't communicate well and we were not organized but later we worked well together and we attempted to solve these issues by creating a team leader and we started to learn from our mistakes...Overall the simulation taught us so many things ..It is a great preparation if someone wants to open their own</i> | <i>"To achieve our goals our team was unified....We helped each other...There was no tension nor conflict occurred"</i> | <i>"We all respected each other opinions and we got positive energy and commitment to improve our company's performance"</i> |

| | <i>business in the future”</i> | | | |
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| Baldwin | <i>“The team worked very well together as there was a cooperation between us....but at the beginning it was a bit confusing because we didn’t know the exact role of each member and also how to schedule our meetings....but we solved our problems by communication through what’s app group that we created”</i> | <i>“We worked cohesively but at the beginning we faced problems regarding setting appropriate time of our meetings....The simulation was a whole new experience for all of us and we were all motivated to win against all other teams”</i> | <i>“As team we were not 100% efficient as we have sometimes dealt with miscommunication and misunderstanding adding to time conflicts due to being drifted apart in many other courses....We managed to overcome that through organization and well planning”</i> | <i>“With time and our ups and downs.... We were able to look at our goal more seriously and to meet every time we had to together”</i> |
| Chester | <i>“At the beginning the team was very excited but we faced problems as some of the team members were not willing to participate actively but we offered help whenever possibleSome other minor problems were deciding on which plans we should use”</i> | <i>“Our teamwork problem mainly revolved around what decisions to take ... We attempted to solve them by learning from our mistakes and by trying to evaluate each member’s decision before actually taking the final decisions”</i> | <i>“Our teams works and bonds really well together...We have developed friendship that made it enjoyable to work together...We shared commitment to our goal for winning’</i> | <i>“At the beginning it was tough dealing with people who have different opinions and we got difficulty to meet at same time...but getting to know each other by time we managed to put all of our efforts and different perspectives together”</i> |
| Digby | <i>“From the beginning we agreed that every one of us presents ideas firmly without any kind of rush...Each of us was confident and good listener that helped us to avoid stress... Sometimes some got problems to meet because of important dates clashes but consistency is key too in the team as we never changed the date and time of our meetings”</i> | <i>“As a team we were confident but some members lack commitment...So in cooperation we need to work more on how we communicate as a team to perform better”</i> | <i>“Our team did well and we were all on the same page regarding how we can approach our competition”</i> | <i>“At the beginning it was very challenging to be able meeting all together weekly...So we started to have an online meeting to take decisions together... Finally we started having meetings at university”</i> |
| Erie | <i>“A part of the key success in this course is the group work...We need to work and communicate well together in order to reach the best results.....We didn’t face any problems to agree about final decisions but we faced sometimes problems to meet together at same time but we did overcome this problem through being in contact through phone, social media, what’s app or even video call... We as a team really like to work together”</i> | <i>“We all worked well together except in very few cases...We sometimes argue on the best strategy but we all put enough effort and have little problems to deal with each other....All in all we are all very pleased with the simulation ...We learnt how to efficiently run successfully a business”</i> | <i>“At the beginning there were some members had all the work on their shoulders and some were just relaxing... Thus we discussed this issue openly and most members responded to work fairly”</i> | <i>“Overall regardless of the conflict of our personalities and of our time ...We managed to coordinate the decisions together”</i> |
| Ferris | <i>“The problem that each one of us was so excited to begin the simulation... We had lots of ideas and different strategies...but we were able to solve this problem by managing our ideas to allow us to</i> | <i>“Each member of our team always willing to work hard and do the best to reach success...We have not experienced any problems...All in all it is a</i> | <i>“Our team faced lots of conflicts regarding the strategy ...Luckily we always resolved our conflicts quickly through discussion and</i> | <i>“As a team we work very well together... We all share the same goals and same enthusiasm towards taking the competition seriously and trying our best to</i> |

*achieve more success by better teaching method than cooperation”
cooperating and filling some the textbook since it
operational gaps” provides the students with
the experience instead of
just reading and
memorizing a book”*

*win ...but we faced one
problem regarding our
schedules that were very
different ...Hence it was
difficult for all team
members to meet the same
time but we tried to review
decisions just before or after
our class”*

3.5 The Experiential Learning Approach: Analysis of Students' Response to Capsim Business Simulation at AUC

Along one academic year (Fall 2015 - Spring 2016), the undergraduate students who were enrolled in the four sections of course 'Introduction to Business' at AUC, got an opportunity to demonstrate an experiential learning through the business simulation. Generally, the students clearly reflected their appreciation to be involved in the business simulation. In fact, the case study reflects that students perceived the business simulation as a valuable learning model that supported their abilities to apply theoretical concepts as in real world, to increase as well their self confidence, to accept diversity through collaborative teamwork learning and mutual interdependence, adding to develop their interpersonal skills, time management and accountability. Although the majority of students perceived the business simulation as a great learning experience and as a good base for experiencing teamwork, yet some students have expressed some reservations regarding challenges they faced along teamwork because of differences in their personalities and difficulties to meet regularly because of differences in their other courses' schedules.

In addition and from another perspective, along the same academic year (Fall 2015 - Spring 2016), qualitative data was recorded from the same undergraduate students who were enrolled in the same four sections of course 'Introduction to Business' at AUC. The same students' comments on their course evaluations are also reflecting and confirming that most of them were really satisfied and appreciated their involvement in business simulation. These students' comments are totally different compared to previous semesters' students' evaluations regarding the same course that used to be a traditional learning approach, as the students previously used to complaint from lots of memorization, lack of a real practical world exposure and the need to link the theories with real life applications to avoid memorization or feeling boredom in studying. Actually, after integrating the business simulation into the course 'Introduction to Business' at AUC starting the academic year (Fall 2015 - Spring 2016), the students' feedback regarding the transition from traditional learning to experiential learning was very positive and encouraging to maintain such experiential learning model. The analysis of students' feedback reflected the improvements in students' achievement to apply key concepts in various business situations, the higher level of students' satisfaction regarding the course and instructor, the higher level of students' self confidence regarding their abilities to perform better in real business environment.

Integrating the business simulation in this course, as a new experiential learning approach, can reflect a remarkable development of the course compared to the traditional learning approach of the same course along previous semesters. The implication of the case study analysis supports the findings of the literature that business students' involvement in experiential leaning can enhance their self confidence, their abilities to apply theoretical concepts into various real life situations, to develop their creativity and entrepreneurial skills, adding to be accountable as well for their managerial decisions and actions. In other words, experiential learning can successfully support learning effectiveness in business education.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The major concern among educators is providing effective learning for their students. This study sheds the light on the crucial use of experiential learning approach for supporting learning effectiveness in business education. The case study demonstrates the positive responses received from various teams of students to the business simulation as a new experiential learning approach and confirming its effectiveness as a valuable learning approach in business education. Along the competitive market, experiential learning can enhance the reputation of business education institutions regarding the ability to prepare more competitive students for the labor market as the students can have higher and much better technical and interpersonal competences.

To overcome the barriers and resistance to change that may prevent a widespread adoption of experiential learning approach and also for encouraging students' engagement to experiential learning activities, it is

recommended to prepare a pool of well informed and well trained business educators who have self confidence regarding their capacity to use experiential learning activities with their students. Moreover, top management or leaders in business education institutions should create an appropriate organizational culture inspiring, enhancing and supporting the use of experiential learning to compliment the traditional face to face learning approach, adding to providing all the required financial or physical resources to integrate experiential learning as it is really crucial to create a supportive experiential learning environment. It is also recommended to start the use of experiential learning approach as early as middle school which would be a basic preparation and guidance for further education. Through learning styles questionnaires, it is recommended to set an early professional orientation according to various students' learning styles and skills to evaluate students' capabilities to achieve better performance in further education. It is crucial to ensure a well planned integration of experiential learning activities to ensure covering all the intended learning outcomes of the course and program. It is also necessary to ensure that business educators are clearly communicating to their students their expectations and aims of experiential learning exercises, adding to set a clear set of procedures for efficiently running the experiential learning activities. To ensure a proper execution of experiential learning approach, it is urgently required to ensure a well preparation for both the instructors and the students. The instructors should be well prepared to know what should be covered, how to be applied and how to be assessed. Moreover, the students should be well prepared and well informed to be ready applying what they learned, adding to providing all the required technology and other required resources. To set a stronger link between students and the real business work environment, it is recommended to shed the light on successful practices based on experiential learning models from other countries as well as to ensure the engagement of academics, practitioners and various stakeholders.

As future directions, researchers can investigate as well the effectiveness of other various experiential learning models such as field trip teaching strategy. Moreover, a broader scope of research work to be across various ranges of students' ages and academics' specialties can be recommended as it is crucial for more depth investigation of the impact of various experiential learning models.

At the end, this study contributes to the experiential learning literature as it concludes that experiential learning approach encompasses the potential to strongly and effectively support learning process and it is recommended to be integrated into business education as it is effectively improving students' overall satisfaction and performance. To accomplish this aim successfully, the right mix of educators' selection and training is necessary, adding to set the appropriate educational institutions' experiential learning policies and practices as well as the consideration of students' various learning styles in the assessment and the development of experiential learning activities.

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