

# Experiential Learning: A Shift in Teaching

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## PROPOSAL

Experiential learning is the process of inquiring the nature of experience and how we learn from it. Some scholars have suggested that the word experiential learning is redundant because learning itself is generally conceived to be derived from experience as opposed to instinct for example.

Keeton, (1978) defined experiential learning as: 'learning where the learner is directly connected with the realities being studied. It differs from the learner who solely hears about, reads about, or talks about said realities without experiencing or encountering them as part of the learning process. The main source of learning is then a sense experience and in-context action instead of deep thinking, analysis, or academic knowledge. Experience permeates all types of learning, yet its importance is not always acknowledged and sometimes disregarded. One of the pillars of experiential learning is active engagement as it involves the students being fully immersed through their thoughts, feelings, and physical activity. Beard & Wilson (2006) state that Experiential Learning is the: "sense-making process of active engagement between the inner world of the person and the outer world of the environment."

Experiential learning allows practitioners to create a learning environment which mimics a learners' professional setting. In doing so, this environment fosters greater understanding, insight and a better application in the real world.

Furthermore, individuals should not only be able to process facts and theories but also develop the desire to be effective, understand the task at hand and how to perform it successfully. For that to happen, they need to experience it. (Silberman, 2007)

Consequently, the internal and external environments both play a key part in experiential learning. When it comes to the internal environment, Intelligence is one factor that we as educators need to understand both from a practitioner and student point of view. Howard Gardner, founder of the Multiple Intelligences theory, proposed a methodology aiming at mapping the range of capabilities that we possess beyond the IQ test.

This workshop aims to explore the eight categories of intelligence and how both students and practitioners can crystalize them so that through exchange and experiential learning on the one hand: teachers understand how their profile of Intelligence impacts their teaching approach in the classroom and on the other hand, help students learn through

their preferred intelligences.

Problematic: the legitimacy of universities is questioned in terms of employability of graduates and income generation. Market interests (neoliberal ideology) are placed above common good interests such as equality, social justice and moral responsibility and more and more universities are employing marketing and finance professionals to influence educational programs in order to respond to market trends. (Trede & McEwen, 2016).

How do we through experiential learning, ensure that our fashion curriculum and delivery still meet the common good and provide students with the skills they need to not only be employable but also initiate change in their future workplace whilst enhancing the teaching experience?

Trede & McEwen, (2016) uncovered that both students and educators have a difficult time putting these ideas into practice. As previously mentioned, one of the pillars of experiential learning is active engagement as it involves the students being fully immersed through their thoughts, feelings, and physical activity. For such experience to take place, students must be able to freely challenge and question why things are being done in a particular manner without fear of being singled out or marked down. The challenge for the practitioner then is their self-image as a teacher and how their perceived role may restrain or facilitate collective reflection. That is when the Intelligence profile could be of benefit to both the practitioner and the student.

Howard Garner, founder of the Multiple Intelligence (MI) theory states that MI is 'the capacity to solve problems and create products in rich context and natural settings.' (Amstrong, 2009). The theory is a way of mapping the range of abilities that human beings possess by arranging those abilities in eight categories of intelligence, which is not related to IQ (Intelligence Quotient).

The Multiple Intelligences are linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinaesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intra-personal and naturalist. During the workshop, attendees will have the opportunity through activities to map out their intelligences. According to Garner, everyone possesses all eight intelligences at different levels of proficiency. However, some intelligences can be crystalised or paralysed by external experiences. Practitioners can play a key role in either crystalizing or paralysing their students' intelligence.

Considering these two problematics previously mentioned, this workshop will aim to answer the following question: How can both students and practitioners achieve balance so that learning is not just limited to assessing competences, but expanded to incorporate a practice based on morals and values both personal and collectives and move beyond a binary approach (knowing-doing or theory-practice)? How can curricula

present occasions for learning from experiences and actions?

### **WORKSHOP AIM**

My aim with this workshop is to challenge the pedagogical status quo and challenge practitioners, through the use of theirs and students' intelligence maps, to create space within their teaching practice to allow students to think beyond what they are merely asked to do both at university and in their future careers. How can we get students to develop critical thinking and create a professional identity in which they will be secure enough to enact and achieve high job satisfaction. Moore, (2006) states that critical thinking can be added to a course curriculum as part of a problem-solving task. This will encourage students to pay attention to how they think when they approach a task then potentially use those transferable skills in their day to day lives.

Considering the rapid development and implementation of artificial intelligence, having the ability to operate in the way that technology cannot, will ultimately increase the value of the individual who possesses intra and inter-personal skills and high levels of critical thinking skills. (Ivory, 2021) Trede & McEwen (2016) offer a framework they call 'deliberate professional', a model that conceptualises professional practice and professional education as a 'working' and learning practice that merges both technicality and morality as well as theory and practice.

As practitioners, we need to implement pedagogies that prepare students to be purposeful and deliberate in their professional practices and push forward student agency, collaboration, participation and collective reflection. We need to foster learning by doing and reflecting on experiences so that our students are not only learners but become doers and future practitioners with a voice and ability to make a difference in the world, positioning students as problem solvers who are aware of the current issues shaping the current fashion landscape but also can foresee future challenges and offer solutions through their creative practices. (Trede & McEwen, 2016)

Deep knowing of self through authenticity, humanity, ethicality, professional artistry and practiced wisdom is necessary both for practitioners and learners. All activities and exercises will aim to initiate this for both practitioners and learners using the MI framework as a supporting tool.

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