



LEARNING BY DOING

The Power of Experiential Learning in Management Education

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

10 Takeaways From the GBSN Summit on Experiential Learning



"The conference provides a platform for business schools, business leaders and policy-makers to meet and discuss to find ways how to improve management education to meet the needs of the rapidly changing landscapes of global business of the 21st century."

- H.E. Dr. Hang Chuon Naron, Minister of Education Youth and Sport, Cambodia

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On August 1, 2016 nearly 60 leaders in business education and industry gathered to participate in a summit on "Learning by Doing: The Power of Experiential Learning in Management Education," hosted by the National University of Management in Phnom Penh. Delegates from a dozen countries explored approaches to applying experiential learning to management education and opportunities to increase multi-sector engagement in management education in the Asia Pacific region, particularly with the private sector. The summit was sponsored by GGear Co. Ltd. and IDP Education.

The speakers and facilitators for the summit included top U.S. and Asian business educators, prominent Cambodian entrepreneurs, and the Cambodian Minister of Education, Youth and Sport, providing varied perspectives on experiential education in Cambodia and across the globe. Below are 10 key thoughts that came out of their dialogues.

1. Experiential learning is results-based education.

Experiential Learning was defined for the purposes of this summit as a "results-focused method" that "addresses actual business and leadership challenges" and "accelerates organizational performance and individual leader development" in a way that engages the learner in reality, not just theory.

2. Preparation is key.

Action-based experiential learning can take many forms depending on the resources available and learning objectives of the program, but regardless of the form it takes, student success is key and needs to be planned for in the design and execution of the program. This means it is important to arrange appropriate "pre-reflection" activities. Some of those mentioned during the summit include: a cultural intelligence workshop (if traveling internationally), previous students sharing their experiences, coaching students through potential food, safety and sanitary differences; and having real consultants walk the students through the consulting process.

3. Be creative to find necessary resources.

Programs like this are resource intensive, requiring funding and faculty time. Some schools are able to fund projects by charging consulting clients, but others get creative by fundraising from alumni or getting grants. Some schools recruit faculty resources by counting time spent running the program and coaching students as teaching hours. Others depend on student leadership to do much

of the groundwork for the program, providing additional experiential learning and leadership training in the process.

4. Tap your network for projects.

Finding projects and ensuring client satisfaction are essential components to a successful program. It helps to streamline and standardize the process for sourcing projects, which can be found through university corporate partners, alumni or even by having students source projects themselves. Regardless of the source, a thorough debrief of the project, despite the intense time commitment it requires, ensures better learning outcomes and future engagements with consulting clients.

5. Promote the value for school and students.

Experiential learning projects make a positive impact on student learning in school and in placements after graduation. "We see distinct benefits in placement," said Deepa Krishnan of SP Jain.



About GBSN

The Global Business School Network tackles the developing world's severe shortage of management talent by building local management education capacity through our programs, networking and events. Our international network of over 70 leading business schools is dedicated to improving economic and social conditions by strengthening business and entrepreneurship education.

For more information on our events, programs and opportunities to get involved visit us online at www.gbsn.org

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6. Design a meaningful experience.

Design can make or break the educational value of an experiential learning program. While it can be a harder sell to students, travel trips should be focused away from touristy or high profile locations (such as New York or London). In addition, the connections with the corporate client need to be solid, as an "orphan" project in a company will not provide a satisfactory learning experience for the students. Committed alumni make great clients, as they are invested in not just the project, but also in mentoring students from their alma mater. Most importantly, the program should align with a school's learning objectives and culture. These factors should shape whether the program is, for example, international or local, with social enterprises or multi-national corporations, or classroom-based or field-based.

7. Experience breeds maturity.

Every one of the employers at the summit mentioned the need for graduates to develop "maturity" before they are employable. They cited the value of any exposure to the working world as important in developing necessary communication, critical thinking and leadership skills. The experiences they noted included consulting projects, internships, observation and analysis, informational interviews and even in-class presentations by professionals.

8. Experiential learning is highly relevant to Cambodia and other developing countries.

"Zoe Ng of Raintree Development said that from the employer's perspective, by building a local program you don't get brain drain and you also don't have the problem of bringing students in from abroad that don't know the local customs or environment. "It's most valuable to have students already in this context; someone who's been through a local program with experience is ideal." According to the Minister of Education, there is a skills mismatch between graduates and jobs as the economy changed rapidly from agrarian to modern. Most business in Cambodia is family business and people learned by "by imitation and by making mistakes." Today these business owners are sending their children to top universities where

they are learning by study and research, but they do not have the know-how or innovative spirit that their parents were forced to develop. Experiential learning can provide valuable skills, as well as a link between generations in the working world.

9. Action-learning projects are different in developing regions.

Unlike in more developed economies where many established companies have the resources and capacity to engage students in consulting projects, many developing economies are populated with small- and medium-sized enterprises. Ng explained that "the challenge is to structure a project for graduate students because companies are young and growing. How can they work together if they don't fit into the box of traditional programs?" G Gear, a growing electronics company has an informal partnership with National University of Management, where students share advice and knowledge. Brown Coffee has welcomed interns from the US and local universities to work on specific projects. Growing companies like these are looking for help with strategy development, new trends, joint research on markets and the competitive environment, helping with benchmarking, and analyzing case studies.

10. Experiential learning programs are complex and context-specific.

In the workshop portion of the summit groups of participants worked collaboratively to design an innovative program. Each of the groups came up with very different solutions based on the outcomes and environment they designated. One team designed a competition-based consulting project for a 200-person undergraduate class that relied heavily on peer review for the feedback and evaluation of the project work. Another designed an entrepreneurial project as a component of every course a student took. Regardless of their approach, each was challenged to effectively address all of the components of a successful experiential learning program.

