Experiential Learning in Management Education

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Dr. Michellana Jester
MIT Sloan School of Management
mjester@mit.edu

- Select one visual explorer card that resonates with you
- Introduce yourself to those at your table
- Share your card and why you chose it

Starting our work together

A few ground rules…

Choose to be present & participate. Turn off phones, tablets, etc; share your unique perspective and experiences (successes and failures)

Own your own learning. Be a "thirsty learner"

Respect each other. Value each others' thinking and contributions; honor time limits; create the space for every voice to be heard.

Everyone participates- our success depends on it! Share ideas & ask questions. Be engaged from a position of inquiry and intellectual curiosity.

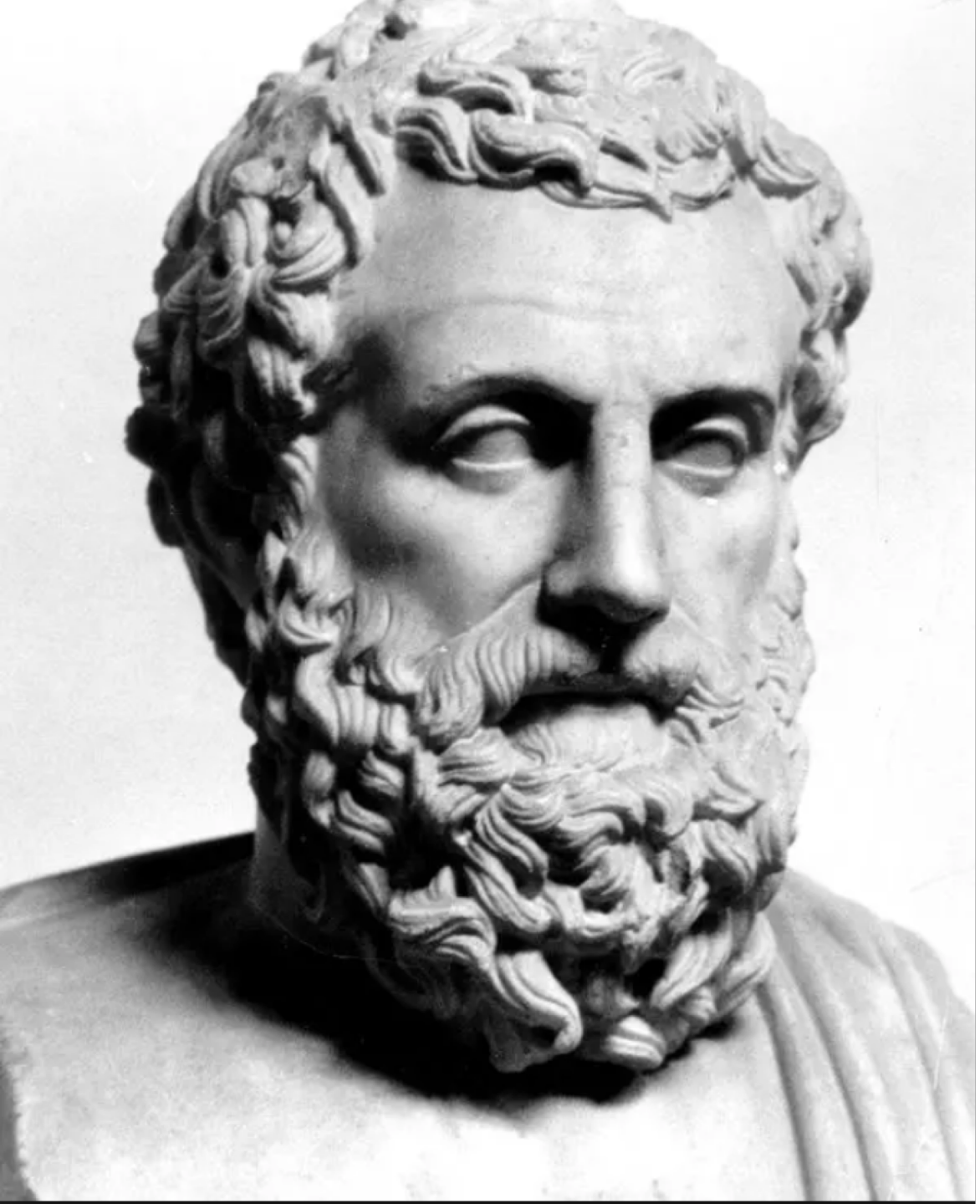
Listen to understand and for new insight. Speak honestly

Treat everything you hear as an opportunity to learn and grow. Stay open to new ways of doing things-- Be positive, non-judgmental; be intrigued by the differences you hear; be open to being surprised.

So, let’s begin!

Experiential learning in management education: A Brief History

- Widespread adoption of experiential learning in Business (1980s-90s)
  - Action Learning
- General Electric (England) 1970s- Developing Senior Manager's Programme and Action Learning Projects International
- US companies developed their own brand of *action learning*
  - Training and development
  - Successes in leadership development
  - Practice of a successful organization
- Business Schools and Universities
- Ford and Carnegie Foundation Report & Critiques of US management education (1950s)
  - Shift from practice to theory in 1960s
  - Challenges from practitioners as to the relevancy of business school education
  - Attempts to integrate experiential learning into curriculum
  - Variety of programs that seek to connect theory to practice



"… for the things we have to learn, before we can do them, we learn by doing them."

Aristotle

The Nichomachean Ethics

Experiential learning simply defined

*"In its simplest form, **experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing**. Experiential education first immerses learners in an experience and then encourages reflection about the experience to develop skills or new ways of thinking"*

(Lewis & Williams, 1994)

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

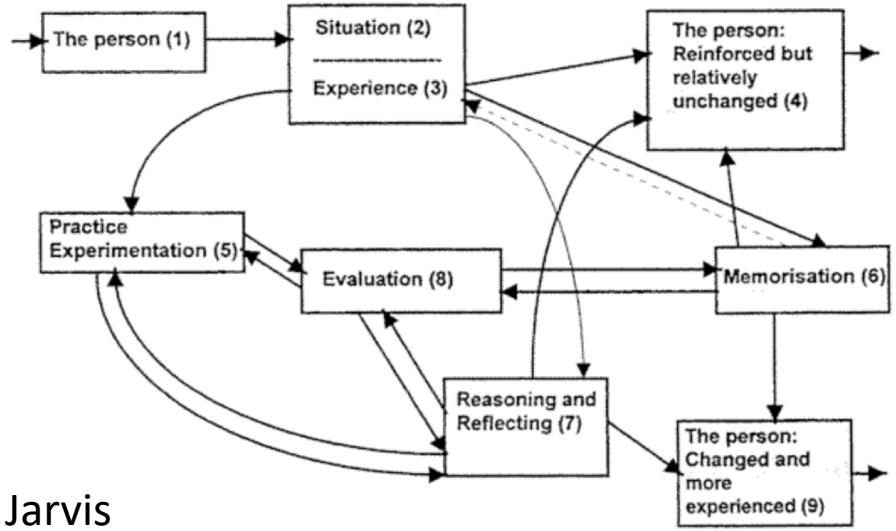
And also defined as…

- **The process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience**. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience. (Kolb, 1984)

- Any **learning that supports students in applying their knowledge and conceptual understanding** to real-world problems or situations… (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010)

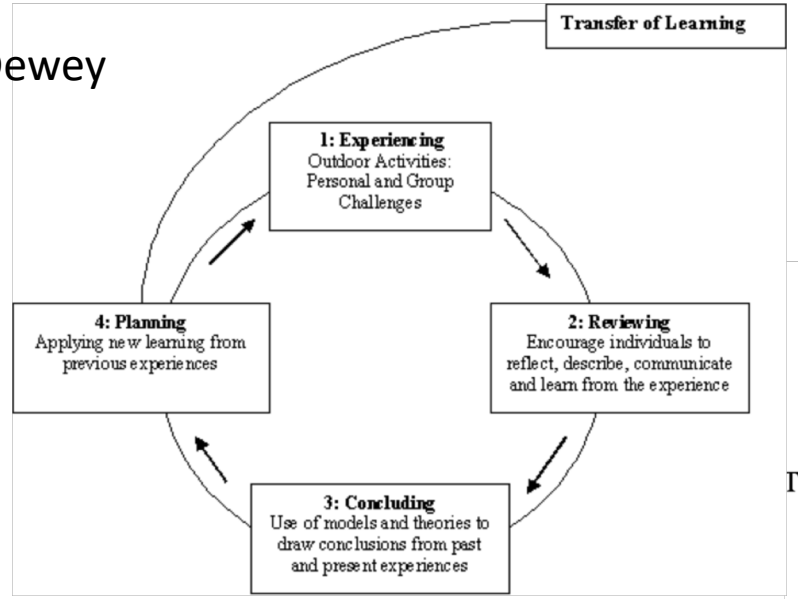
- An **interdisciplinary approach** based in management education and psychology, and implicating a holistic process of action/reflection based on experience/abstraction (Bevan & Kipa, 2012)

- **A teaching philosophy that informs many methodologies in which educators purposefully engage with learners** in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities (Association for Experiential Education, www.aee.org)

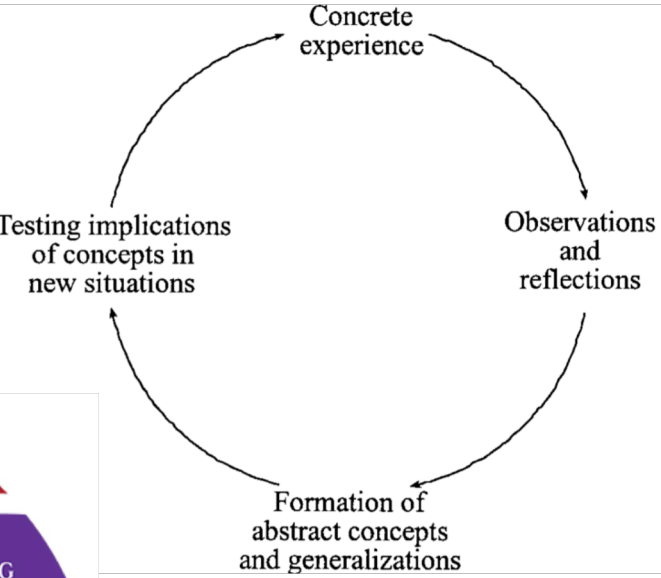


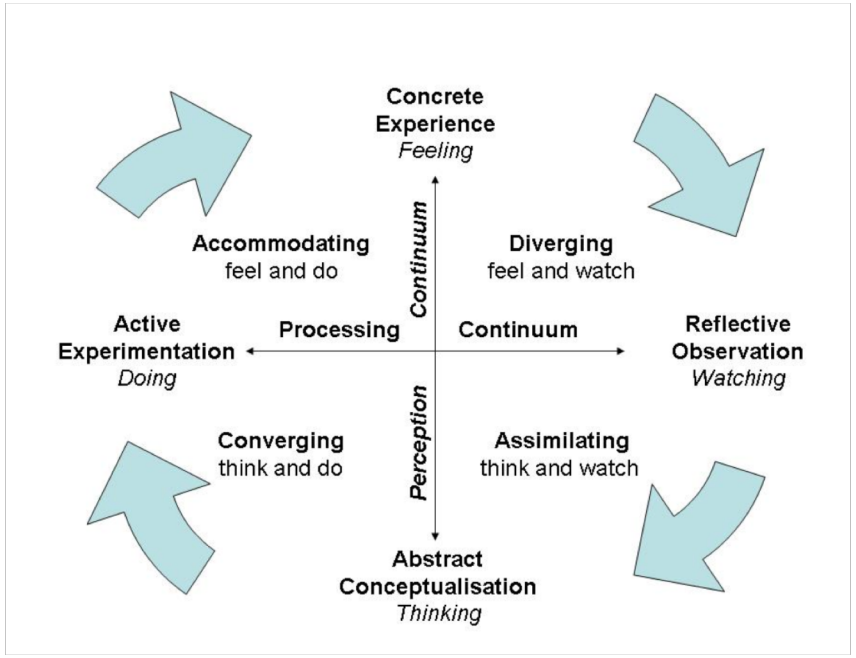
Jarvis

Dewey



Lewin





Kolb

Institute for Experiential Learning

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Experiential learning can be defined by the qualities it imparts on its learners

- A **willingness to shift their mindset** or preconceived notions
- An **ability to reason for themselves** and articulate their position
- An **ability to work effectively and productively with a diverse group** with different view points
- The **capacity to identify the role of emotion in their learning and reflect** on how it may impact learning
- The **willingness to reflect on their learning and use that insight** to inform new learnings

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Marsick 1992; Moon, 2004; Senge, 2006

Experiential learning can also be defined by what it's not

- Conventional academic instruction
  - *It is different*
- Students being told what to do
  - *Students manage their own learning*
- A "Banking Model" (Freire) relationship
  - The relationship between instructor and student is dynamic, with responsibilities passed to the student
- Predictable curriculum and learning outcomes
  - *Curriculum may not be clearly identified and the student may have to identify and acquire the knowledge they need*

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Experiential learning draws from the work of prominent 20th century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development

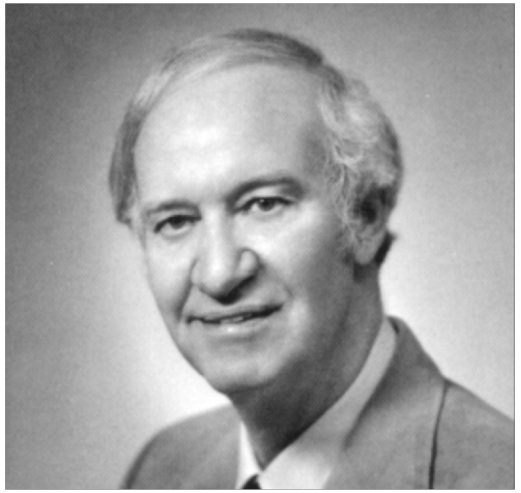
John Dewey
Philosopher, Psychologist,
Educational Reformer
(1859-1952)

Kurt Lewin
Psychologist
(1890-1947)

Jean Piaget
Scientist, Psychologist
(1896-1980)

David Kolb
Educational Theorist
(b. 1939)

Other experiential learning influencers



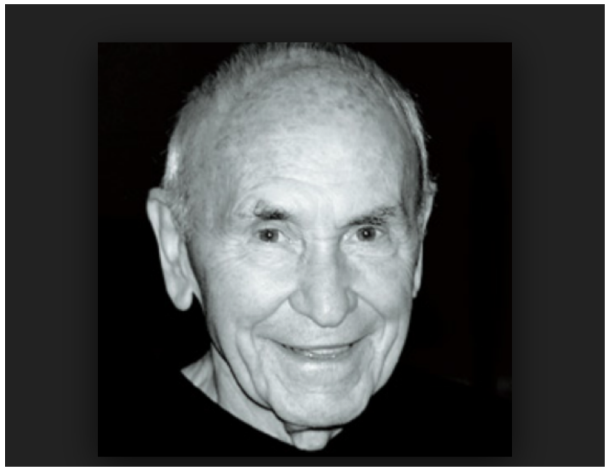
Malcolm Knowles

***Informal Adult Education* (1950)**

***The Modern Practice of Adult Education* (1970)**

Concept of Andragogy

- Adults are autonomous and self-directed
- Adults have an accumulation of life experiences and knowledge that should be connected to their learning
- Adults are goal-oriented
- Adults are relevancy-oriented
- Adults are practical



Jack Mezirow

Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning (1991); Learning as Transformation: Critical Perspectives on a Theory in Progress (2000)

Transformational Learning Theory

- Adult exhibit two kinds of learning: instrumental and communicative
- Learning involves change to meaning structures which occurs reflection about content, process or premises
- Learning involves refining/elaborating meaning schemes, learning new schemes, transforming schemes, or transforming perspectives

Maria Montessori

Montessori Method (1916)

Montessori is a method of education that is based on self-directed activity, hands-on learning and collaborative play. In Montessori classrooms children make creative choices in their learning, while the classroom and the highly trained teacher offer age-appropriate activities to guide the process. Children work in groups and individually to discover and explore knowledge of the world and to develop their maximum potential.

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Five Learning Orientations

Aspect	*Behaviorist*	*Humanist*	*Cognitivist*	*Social Cognitive*	*Constructivist*
Learning theorists	Guthrie, Hull, Pavlov, Skinner, Thorndike, Tolman, Watson	Maslow, Rogers	Ausubel, Bruner, Gagne, Koffka, Kohler, Lewin, Piaget	Bandura, Rotter	Candy, Dewey, Lave, Piaget, Rogoff, von Glaserfeld, Vygotsky
View of the learning process	Change in behavior	A personal act to fulfill development	Information processing (including insight, memory, perception, metacognition)	Interaction with and observation of others in a social context	Construction of meaning from experience
Locus of learning	Stimuli in external environment	Affective and developmental needs	Internal cognitive structure	Interaction of person, behavior, environment	Individual and social construction of knowledge
Purpose of learning	To produce behavioral change in desired direction	To become self-actualized, mature, autonomous	To develop capacity and skills to learn better	To learn new roles and behaviors	To construct knowledge
Instructor's role	Arrange environment to elicit desired response	Facilitate development of whole person	Structure content of learning activity	Model and guide new roles & behaviors	Facilitate and negotiate meaning-making with learner
Manifestation in adult learning	-Behavioral objectives -Accountability Performance improvement -Skill development -HRD & training	-Andragogy -Self-directed learning -Cognitive development -Transformational learning	-Learning how to learn -Societal role acquisition -Intelligence, learning, and memory related to age	-Socialization -Self-directed learning -Locus of control -Mentoring	-Experiential learning -Transformation learning -Reflective practice -Communities of practice -Situated learning

Five Learning Orientations

Aspect	*Behaviorist*	*Humanist*	*Cognitivist*	*Social Cognitive*	*Constructivist*
Learning theorists	Guthrie, Hull, Pavlov, Skinner, Thorndike, Tolman, Watson	Maslow, Rogers	Ausubel, Bruner, Gagne, Koffka, Kohler, Lewin, Piaget	Bandura, Rotter	Candy, Dewey, Lave, Piaget, Rogoff, von Glaserfeld, Vygotsky
View of the learning process	Change in behavior	A personal act to fulfill development	Information processing (including insight, memory, perception, metacognition)	Interaction with and observation of others in a social context	Construction of meaning from experience
Locus of learning	Stimuli in external environment	Affective and developmental needs	Internal cognitive structure	Interaction of person, behavior, environment	Individual and social construction of knowledge
Purpose of learning	To produce behavioral change in desired direction	To become self-actualized, mature, autonomous	To develop capacity and skills to learn better	To learn new roles and behaviors	To construct knowledge
Instructor's role	Arrange environment to elicit desired response	Facilitate development of whole person	Structure content of learning activity	Model and guide new roles & behaviors	Facilitate and negotiate meaning-making with learner
Manifestation in adult learning	-Behavioral objectives -Accountability Performance improvement -Skill development -HRD & training	-Andragogy -Self-directed learning -Cognitive development -Transformational learning	-Learning how to learn -Societal role acquisition -Intelligence, learning, and memory related to age	-Socialization -Self-directed learning -Locus of control -Mentoring	-Experiential learning -Transformation learning -Reflective practice -Communities of practice -Situated learning

The Six Propositions of Experiential Learning

Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes

All learning is relearning

Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world

Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world

Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment

Learning is the process of creating knowledge

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Characteristics that define an activity as experiential

- Mixture of content and process
- Absence of excessive judgment
- Engagement in purposeful endeavors
- Encouraging the big picture perspective
- Intentional reflection on learning
- The creation of an emotional investment
- The re-examination of values
- The presence of meaningful relationships
- Learning outside one's perceived comfort zone

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Chapman, McPhee, & Proudman, 1995

Experiential learning examples

- Hands on learning
- Simulation
- Role play
- Internship
- Gaming
- Outward bound
- Field work
- Service learning
- Volunteering
- Study abroad

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Experiential learning examples

- Hands on learning
- Simulation
- Role play
- Internship
- Gaming
- Outward bound
- Field work
- Service learning
- Volunteering
- Study abroad

Project Based Learning

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

"…(learning) from work experience mimics everyday learning. It is disrupted and non-routine, emotion is involved… much of the learning is incidental or informal… there are different points of view for virtually any issue…. Making something of this chaotic learning situation is confusing for a learner who is used to being 'fed' information in lectures."

Jennifer Moon, 2004

Steps for incorporating experiential activities

- Analyze learner population and determining needs
  - Graduate or undergraduate?
  - Work experience?
  - Cultural needs?
- Identify appropriate activities for your learner population and course content
  - Activity appropriate for course content and cognitive needs
  - Activity that meets course objectives
  - Activity that links learner experience to key course concepts
  - Activity that will complement program curriculum
- Identify potential integration issues
  - Tradeoffs
  - Program curriculum fit
  - Institutional support
  - Liability issues
  - Partner/external institutions selection
  - Project/course election fairness

Key elements of experiential activity implementation

- Students should feel comfortable taking calculated risks and making mistakes
- Problem/challenge should be relevant to the learner
- Properly set expectations and be clear about rationale
- Student should identify and regularly revisit personal learning objectives
- Match leaners with appropriate stretch activities
- Provide students with multiple opportunities to give and receive feedback and reflect on their experience
- Instructor as facilitator and resource rather than authority
- Assess activity outcomes & revise

Typical project based learning structure in management education

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Typical elements of project based learning course

- Real project
- Real-world business challenge
- Extended time period
- Peer learning
- Faculty support/engagement
- Tangible deliverable
- Final assessment

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

We tend to see multi-stakeholder benefits…

Students

- Skill development
- Test assumptions
- Enhance problem solving skills
- Self-Directed
- Peer learning
- Connect with potential employers/industry experts

Faculty

- Connect with industry leaders
- Business innovation
- Instruction stretch/collaborative approach

External Partners

- University relationship
- Learn new business practices/theory
- Build network to potential employees
- Relatively low cost consultancy work

Alumni

- Enhanced engagement
- Project recruiter
- Project Opportunities
- Informal/formal mentor to current students

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

But there are also challenges

Learning Objectives

- Clarity and intentionality
- Broad but specific and meaningful
- Desired but not fixed outcome
- Stakeholder learning interest alignment

Staffing

- High/intense faculty and staff resource use
- Providing just in time resources for an uncertain demand
- Linking the right faculty experts to the right team
- Linking academic content (macro) to project specific issues (micro)
- Matching student teams with the right project

Sponsors and Projects

- Sourcing and identifying projects
- Word of mouth, alums, previous sponsors, personal networks
- Finding the right fit
- Managing client expectations
- Time commitment
- Sharing information
- Deliverables
- Managing client relationship
- Authorizing students
- Variability of quality, scope creep

Role of the instructor in experiential education

- Establish “structure” by managing the course boundaries
- Setting “rules of engagement”
- Providing process tools
- Managing “hungers”
- Serve as a resource/share network
- Be a cheerleader
- Instruct through facilitation

The Challenge of Experiential Learning Assessment

- A unique problem for instructors
- "Confounding variables" (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009)
  - **Precursors**
    - Prior knowledge and experience
    - Demographics
    - 'Pre-existing conditions'
  - **Concomitant**
    - Course specific
    - Group characteristics
    - Situational impacts
    - Frontloading for evaluation
  - **Post-experience**
    - Social desirability
    - Post experience euphoria
    - Post experience readjustment
    - Response shift bias

Assessment of Experiential Learning

- Assess actual vs perceived learning
- Capture growth and change
- Aim is to improve and understand elements of earning
- Methods of assessment include:
  - Observation
  - Journals
  - Reflection
  - Surveys (peer, pre/post course, 360, etc)
  - Written work
  - Presentations
  - Project deliverable
  - Learning inventory

Assessing Domains of Learning

Cognitive (Understanding)

Understanding information and the evolution of that learning. The core of the learning domains.

Types:
- Written reports
- Presentation content
- Recommendations

Behavioral (Performance)

The practical application of learning.

Types:
- Presentations
- Client engagement/interaction
- Team engagement/interaction

Affective (Motivation)

How motivation, willingness to contribute, empathy, concern, listening, etc are expressed.

Types:
- Class participation
- Reflection papers
- Student self-reporting

Example: Student team projects + Recruitment story

Go-to-market strategy for private school startup in West Africa

Build predictive pricing model for peer-hailing service

New funding and strategic partnerships for an edtech startup

Develop a strategic growth plan

Rethink commercial land use and improve efficiency

Market analysis to expand online video platform services

Design future of Brazilian and LatAm VCs

Develop sales process framework to match global best practices

Upgrade business model to drive its portfolio companies

Management education unique program features

MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Why should we care about this method of learning?

The Future of Learning: Four Key Trends

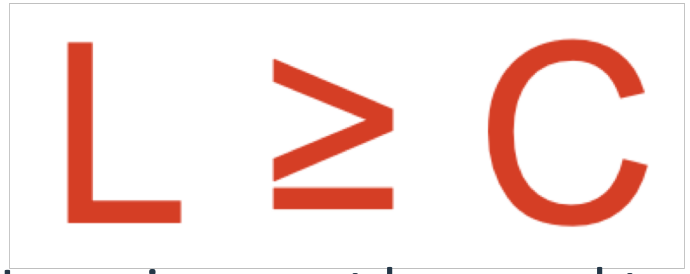
1. The unbundling of education
2. Personalization through technology
3. Continuous education
4. Creativity orientation

Forbes Magazine, 2015

Learning at the Speed of Business

- Mobile platforms for learning at your fingertips
- High impact and immersive experiences to develop new skills and behaviors
- Workplace learning that is core to the company's culture driven by social learning, real-time feedback and networking
- Analytics for learning to enhance performance and measure impact; big data and predictive analytics to continuously improve learning

McKinsey & Company, 2016



Learning must be equal to or faster than the rate of change

(Reg Revans)

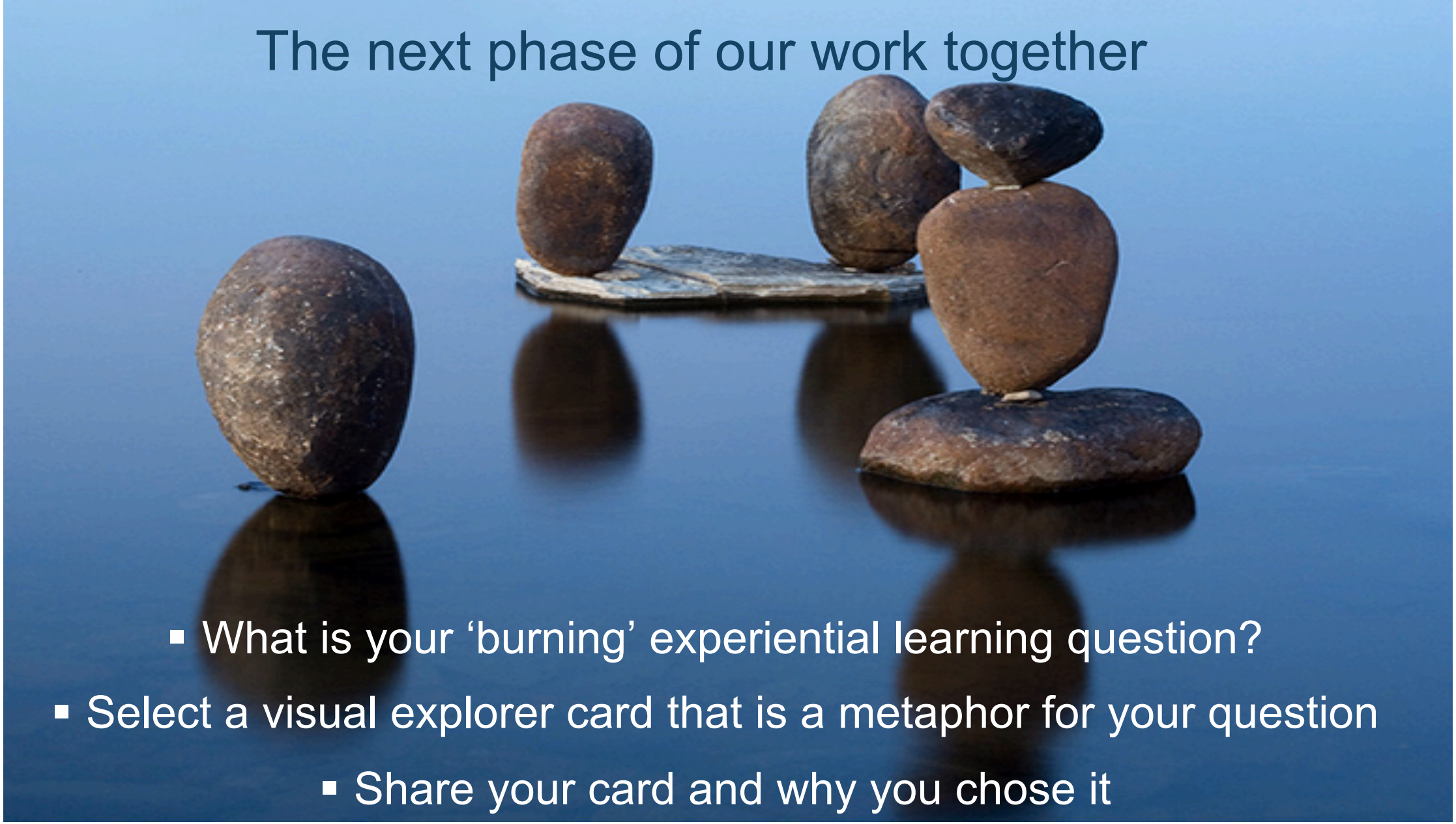
MIT MANAGEMENT SLOAN SCHOOL

gbsn Global Business School Network

Experiential learning as an opportunity to reframe an adaptive challenge

- An “adaptive problem” (Heifetz, 1993)
  - No clear agreement on problem or solution
- The “what” of framing/reframing
  - **Framing**—the initial perception of an issue, challenge, or opportunity, based on past understanding and present input
  - **Reframing**— transforming those perceptions into a new understanding or frame resulting
- Why reframing is important
  - Provides new insight into what is important
- Opens thinking to wider range of options, creativity, and innovation

The next phase of our work together



- What is your ‘burning’ experiential learning question?
- Select a visual explorer card that is a metaphor for your question
- Share your card and why you chose it

Anything that we have to learn to do we learn by the actual doing of it… We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate ones, brave by doing brave ones.

Aristotle,
Niconachaen Ethics, Book II