



Routledge Research in Education

ASSESSMENT FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan



Assessment for Experiential Learning

Chan's book explores the challenges in assessing experiential learning, deepens our understanding and inspires readers to think critically about the purpose of assessment in experiential learning.

Experiential learning has been studied and proven to be effective for student learning, particularly for the development of holistic competencies (i.e. 21st century skills, soft skills, transferable skills) considered essential for individuals to succeed in the increasingly global and technology-infused 21st century society. Universities around the world are now actively organising experiential learning activities or programmes for students to gain enriching and diversified learning experiences; however, the assessment of these programmes tends to be limited, unclear and contested.

Assessment plays a central role in education policies and students' approach to learning. But do educators know how to assess less traditional learning such as service learning, entrepreneurship, cross-discipline or cross-cultural projects, internships and student exchanges? While the current assessment landscape is replete with assessments that measure knowledge of core content areas such as mathematics, law, languages, science and social studies, there is a lack of assessments and research that focus on holistic competencies. How do we assess students' ability to think critically, problem solve, adapt, self-manage and collaborate?

Central to the discussion in this book is the reason students are assessed and how they should be assessed to bring out their best learning outcomes. Offering a collection of best assessment practice employed by teachers around the world, this volume brings together both theoretical and empirical research that underpins assessment; and perceptions of different stakeholders – understanding of assessment in experiential learning from students, teachers and policymakers. The idea of assessment literacy also plays an important role in experiential learning, for example, reflection is often used in assessing students in experiential learning but how reflection literate are educators, are they aware of the ethical dilemmas that arise in assessing students? These questions are discussed in detail. The volume also introduces a quality assurance programme to recognise student development within experiential learning programmes.

The book will be particularly informative to academic developers, teachers, students and community partners who struggle with the development and assessment for experiential learning, those who plan to apply for funding in experiential learning, and policymakers and senior managements seeking evidence and advice on fine-tuning curricular, assessment designs and quality assurance.

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Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan



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Foreword

Universities used to assess what was taught and what was easy to test, and in some they still do. This led to a focus on relatively low-level knowledge tested at the end of courses. This encouraged students to delay study until close to their examination and prompted them to adopt strategies of memorisation. However, they have gradually recognised that this promotes a very restricted curriculum which does not reflect the full range of learning outcomes that are needed to produce graduates who can adapt to the demands of a complex world.

Most disciplines, especially those aligned to professions, have broadened their assessment strategies and few now rely solely on final examinations. The focus has moved to broadening what students learn. For example, the soft skills of communication and working cooperatively with others have taken on greater importance. Much of this change cannot be accommodated in traditional lecture-based courses. New learning modes and activities have been established appropriate for the outcomes being sought. Hands-on active approaches to teaching and learning have been adopted. Some of these involve students in real-world situations outside the educational institution in business, industry or the community. Students learn in the settings where work happens in response to the needs they meet there. Other active approaches utilise various forms of simulation and group work on campus. A great range of terminologies, often discipline-specific, are used to describe these activities – placements, practicums, work-integrated learning, teamwork, practice-sessions, etc. – which all fall under the general heading of experiential learning. Here, the term is used generically as a shorthand to encompass many different experience-based tasks and activities, on campus and beyond.

What all these approaches have in common is that students learn by working with experience. Students undertake tasks that focus on the capabilities and attributes they need to develop to be recognised as a graduate in a particular field. These range from well-equipped simulations of health environments where students practice being nurses or clinicians of various kinds, to simulations of engineering processes or stock markets, etc. Students are placed in either real or simulated contexts in which they have to appraise the situation they find there, intervene appropriately and make judgements about the effectiveness of what they do. They learn through acting and reflecting on what they do. Most

importantly, they learn in consort with others. Technical knowledge and skills combine with interpersonal attributes to address meaningful issues. Tasks are often not individual but require collaboration with others, be they fellow students or others they may encounter in a particular context.

Assessing the learning outcomes of such work requires us to think beyond conventional tests and exams, although there are places where technical knowledge of such practices is still useful. The range and scope of what needs to be judged are far greater than individual disciplinary knowledge or what can be judged through simple written assignments. Graduate attributes and transferable skills now take greater prominence.

As the extent of such experiential activities has increased and as the formal establishing of course learning outcomes has acknowledged their importance, demands on assessment have never been greater. It is not a straightforward matter of applying what we already know about test construction and the design of unseen examinations, but confronting major new challenges: How can hard-to-assess outcomes be evaluated? What new ways of thinking are required if what is to be learned does not reside within a given course unit? How can assessment be designed in ways that do not undermine the very kinds of learning that are being promoted?

Cecilia Chan has been grappling with these issues with success for many years. In this book, she has brought together key ideas from the literature and from her own research and the practice of herself and her colleagues. This is a substantial undertaking as this area is fraught with diverse and conflicting terminology, a lack of consensus on key ideas and a dearth of good quality research. Her book helps the reader navigate the pathways of assessment and experience-based learning. It identifies key ideas and dilemmas: for example, how to choose appropriate assessment practices, how to assess group work, how to involve external parties and how to resolve tensions between reflection and assessment? It is a valuable sourcebook which brings together practices from different disciplines which hitherto have not been discussed in one place. It provides ways of thinking about how generic attributes and discipline-specific learning can be assessed within one course.

This book provides a stimulus for discussion on a challenging topic. It enables us to take more thoughtful approaches to the assessment of an increasingly important aspect of higher education.

David Boud



"To assess or not
To assess, That is
the question."

Sean Callahan
30 Jan 2022

Prologue

This book is written especially for teachers, academic developers, policymakers, students, activity organisers and community partners. I hoped to write a book with which readers can easily reflect, reinvent and reapply onto their own assessment practice for experiential learning. I didn't want to write a book with only practical examples and not supported by research theories and frameworks. However, coming from a professional discipline background, I also understand the frustration of reading (and not understanding) a book with only educational research and theories. But as someone who has been leading academic development at a research-intensive university for over 15 years and conducting serious educational research, I recognise how important it is that the effective strategies we engaged are backed by theories and research evidence. This book bridges that gap. I have brought in my perspectives and experience of what I believe is most useful for readers in assessing experiential learning. I have first-hand experience in most of the assessment approaches I presented in the book, and truly practice what I preach.

In the book, I tried to use simple daily examples to illustrate the different aspects of experiential learning. Knowing the readers of this book may be teachers, educational developers, policy writers from various disciplinary backgrounds and types of post-secondary education institutions (such as community, vocational and technical colleges, research-intensive and teaching-intensive universities), I made it a point to use straightforward language and terms that are not specific to educational research, and I hope that I have managed to make it readable and approachable for all readers. The way this is written is not only for teachers to learn new tricks or improve old ones but also to allow policymakers and funders to fully understand and appreciate the work that teachers and administrative staff deal with in experiential learning, raising caution not to underestimate the workload and hurdles through which teachers and supporting staff have to jump.

The examples, case studies and focus of the book are written for post-secondary education; however, most of the content is suitable for different levels of education. School teachers and principals can adapt some of the assessment strategies to suit the culture of their students and environments.

There is one area that I did not cover, and it is on the assessment of experiential learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, many

experiential learning activities came to a halt, and some activities were reinvented. With some countries imposing travel restrictions, overseas experiential learning opportunities have also reduced significantly, leading to the introduction of the term *experiential learning at home*. Our Pro-Vice-Chancellor at the University of Hong Kong, Prof. Ian Holliday made a very sound point that there are many experiential opportunities to gain at home, and he encouraged teachers to take this opportunity to reinvent. Teachers have begun to use simulation or online flipped learning to replace the part of face-to-face. For example, my colleagues from Architecture, Mathew Pryor and Gavin Coates used concept boards, online studios and online field trips to help students to learn about landscape architecture. Tanya Kempston from the Faculty of Education guided university student mentors to work virtually with secondary school students to create radio dramas and broadcasted them at her virtual radio drama festival called “Hear This!” The Global Citizenship@Home internships at the Faculty of Social Sciences headed by Elsa Lam created a new pathway for students to achieve global learning with internship placements in Hong Kong. Rebecca Lam from the School of Chinese, Faculty of Arts used the YOCLE online platform (see Chapter 9) and asked students to identify Chinese phrases or words that are written incorrectly in restaurants, shopping malls or anywhere that they may encounter in their everyday lives. Students also have the opportunity to comment and like each post as well as messaging the class, bridging the learning isolation from the pandemic. Among these new reinvented experiential learning activities, many new technological tools were trialled and employed. Yet, the actual assessment challenges and approaches in experiential learning remained relatively similar. The main differences were the result of using more technology tools during the pandemic. Thus, those challenges that fall in the category of using technology for assessing experiential learning, such as digital exclusion and breach of academic integrity, persisted. Of course, I am aware that there may be a lot of disagreement and debates regarding some of these so-called newly invented “experiential learning,” where the experience may not be truly authentic, and the kind of student learning experience is reasonably doubted. Future research in this area is needed.

In this book, I have used the generic term “Experiential Learning” to describe the range of activities that are experience-based and hands-on. Using this term as an umbrella term is by no means underplaying other equally important terms used to describe experience-based learning such as experience-based education or work-integrated learning. The term experiential learning is used as it is the most commonly known term to describe these activities in Hong Kong and many parts of Asia. As this book focuses on assessment, I didn’t want to distract readers’ attention with the ambiguities arising from the conceptualisations of the experiential learning terminologies. Thus, in Chapter 1 of the book, I have provided several concepts of experiential learning from researchers, teachers and students to uncloud the idea behind experiential learning.

Each chapter begins with a quote that relates to the theme of the chapter, and the structure of the main body may differ depending on the theme of each chapter. The chapter ends with a section called *questions to ponder* and I included my

own personal reflection after completing each chapter which diverges from the conventions of a typical academic book. This book is written for academic developers, teachers, policymakers, students, activity organisers and community partners more than it is for educational researchers. However, individual researcher will find useful examples and practices from this book and may contemplate the kind of findings that are needed to support these practices to help generate theories and frameworks. The questions and reflections at the end of each chapter may also inspire research questions. Below is a short summary of each chapter.

Short Summary of Each Chapter

Chapter 1: What IS and IS Not Experiential Learning?

From a scholarly definition of experiential learning to a practical interpretation of it from the lenses of educators and students around the world, this chapter offers a tangible definition and typology of experiential learning in relation to its stakeholders. It also includes a list of benefits and challenges for different parties involved in experiential learning, which lay the foundation for a deeper dive into the topics in later chapters.

Chapter 2: Experiential Learning Theories and Frameworks

To prepare readers for a thorough discussion of the nuances that exist in experiential learning, this chapter offers an introduction and digestible breakdown to helpful theories and frameworks that address the fundamentals of the educational phenomenon. It also touches on holistic competency models, which are highly helpful in understanding the non-academic learning outcomes of learning experiences. From experience-related research like Dale's Cone of Experience and Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, to holistic competency-oriented models such as Holistic Competency Development Framework (HCDF) and Chain of Mirrors, this chapter takes readers on an analytical journey covering the rationales, strengths, criticisms and applied examples of theories relevant to experiential learning.

Chapter 3: Assessing Academic Knowledge and Experiential Learning

There are numerous similarities and differences between assessing academic knowledge and holistic competencies. Deeply understanding the former gives us insights into the basics of assessment, including concepts like formative and summative assessment, assessment literacy and students as partners, which are highly useful for and applicable to assessment in experiential learning. This chapter connects the dots between assessments of these two very different groups of learning outcomes, and showcases the benefits and challenges brought about by the different types, methods and approaches to assessment in experiential learning, all well-supported by recent educational research and examples.

Chapter 4: Designing Experiential Learning Assessment

Following the big-picture discussions in the previous chapters, this chapter serves as a detailed guide to assessment design in experiential learning. The chapter begins with a list of essential questions for educators to ask oneself when deciding on assessment types and when designing the actual tasks in their programmes. Enriched with real-life examples and thinking prompts, I present nine common assessment tasks in experiential learning and their respective strengths, weaknesses, effective design tips and sample rubrics. This is followed by eight experiential learning activities, from capstone, internships, to residential education, and concrete ways in which their learning outcomes can be assessed.

Chapter 5: Reflection as Assessment in Experiential Learning

This dedicated chapter digs into reflection as a common but tricky assessment for experiential learning, particularly as evidence for higher-order thinking processes before, during and after an experiential learning activity. Drawing from prominent interdisciplinary studies on reflection as a practice, this chapter explores this complex topic and breaks it down from the perspectives of students, teachers and institutions, before expanding into its sociocultural nuances and reflection literacy, the understanding of which is the key to authentic and meaningful reflection in the context of education. The chapter also offers important principles for designing impactful reflective assessments and lays the foundation for a later discussion on ethics.

Chapter 6: Feedback in Experiential Learning

Feedback can be a challenging aspect in experiential learning, especially when the learning outcomes are personal and often unpredictable, making it difficult to standardise and maintain quality and usefulness of the feedback. In this chapter, I invite readers to examine factors affecting feedback: quality, sources of feedback (i.e., types of assessors), modes or practices, and feedback literacy, and prompt readers to critically evaluate the types of feedback given in various contexts. It also discusses the importance of evaluative judgement and how it can contribute to the development of feedback practices and literacy with further research.

Chapter 7: Ethics in Assessing Experiential Learning

Previous chapters have implied a range of ethical concerns surrounding experiential learning, its pedagogy and assessment, all of which are addressed with examples in this thought-provoking chapter. This chapter covers the concerns and dilemmas that educators should consider during design and other decision-making processes of experiential learning, and illustrates with possible scenarios for readers to ponder. This is followed by some suggested solutions to overcoming these challenges and tips for ensuring a safe space for students, teachers and other stakeholders and participants of experiential learning activities.

Chapter 8: Assessment Cases around the World

This chapter provides an anthology of real-life experiential learning assessment examples from institutions around the world. These authentic and detailed case studies range from community service, field trips, internships, to hands-on practicum programmes, and were sourced from top universities from around the globe, including Hong Kong, Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand. In each case study, I guide readers through its learning activities, assessment methods, rubrics and other grading criteria, feedback from teachers and students, and more, making the chapter a highly useful reference resource for educators and programme designers.

Chapter 9: Assessing Experiential Learning with Technology

Technological advancements inspire innovations in every field, and education is not an exception. This chapter showcases how technology can be effectively utilised to enhance students' experiential learning process either as a main or support tool. I also remind readers of the challenges that may come with the misuse or inappropriate adoption of technology in certain situations and contexts. The chapter is wrapped up by a case study of an overseas construction safety online course using YOCLE, a multi-platform e-learning tool with built-in assessment tools and validated instruments designed specifically for experiential learning and holistic competency.

Chapter 10: Quality Assurance and Evaluation in Experiential Learning

Quality assurance and evaluation of learning and impact are both crucial to a programme's success and sustainability, and potentially messy and intimidating. This chapter draws from my experience as a teaching and learning expert in higher education and a wide range of educational research to guide readers – especially potential grant applicants, administrators and policymakers in the field of experiential learning – through the evaluation process that is most useful and important for experiential learning. This includes critical guiding questions and evaluation methods and tools, as well as the International Holistic Competency Foundation (IHCF) Quality Assurance programme for programmes targeting holistic competency outcomes.

Enjoy your reading, hopefully you will find the book useful.

Yours sincerely,
Cecilia Ka Yuk Chan

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Having an idea and turning it into a book is as amazing as it sounds. It has however been very challenging particularly during the last few years with the COVID-19 pandemic when higher education around the world has been turned upside down and my responsibilities as the head of professional development at my university have massively heightened due to the varied impacts the pandemic has created. Thus, the initial idea of having this book finished within a year prolonged on for three years.

I am glad that I didn't rush into finishing it; instead, I spent the time researching, learning, developing and reflecting. I have learnt so much more in the duration of writing this book, than in any other research projects I have done. I learnt a lot about myself, too. The extra postponement allowed me to publish many journal articles related to the area of reflection, feedback and holistic competencies and provided more practical solutions that I could include in the book. After all, it is two more years, I should somehow have grown older and wiser, right!?!?

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Cecilia K Y Chan (22nd January 2022)



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1 What IS and IS Not Experiential Learning?

A valuable experiential learning curriculum allows students to **reflect, relearn, react, reinvent, reform** and **reapply** their learning.

– Chan, CKY

Introduction

The wide-ranging definitions and ever-enhancing approaches in experiential learning, exacerbated by a lack of unified theories and frameworks, often cloud teachers as to what defines and constitutes the term “experiential learning.” For reasons of consistency, the term “experiential learning” is adopted in this book as a general, descriptive term to refer to a broad range of activities that centre on the intentioned process of learning where “experience [is constituted] as a form of knowledge” (Usher, 1993, p. 169). Using this term as the generic term is by no means to underplay other equally important terms such as experience-based education or work-integrated learning. The term experiential learning is used as it is the most commonly known term to describe these activities in Hong Kong and many parts of Asia. As this book focuses on assessment, I didn’t want to turn the readers’ attention to the ambiguities that arise from the conceptualisations of the experiential learning terminologies. Thus, this first chapter begins by putting together how educational scholars, teachers and students understand and experience experiential learning. This may help teachers and students *uncloud* the concept of experiential learning when they create, build and plan their own activities and focus the design on the more vital areas of “experiencing,” “reflecting,” “clasping,” “applying” and “feedforwarding.”

1.1 The Interpretation and Practice of Experiential Learning from Various Educational Researchers, Scholars and Associations

Below are some direct quotes from educational researchers, scholars and associations who have been investigating various branches of experiential learning. These direct quotes serve as a guide for teachers and a quick literature review for emergent scholars in this area.

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In the words of Lewis and Williams (1994, p. 5): “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 new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking.”

During an interview with David Kolb (2012), he said: “Experiential learning puts learning in the center of the learning process for a learner.” In his book (Kolb, 1984), he commented that “Experiential learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience”. He interprets his ideas using his four-stage experiential learning theory, namely, concrete experience (by experiencing from prior or from new experience), reflective observation (by reflecting on the experience), abstract conceptualization (by rethinking and clasping the experience), and active experimentation (by reapplying and testing what you learnt from the experience and reflection).

Another term that is often used synonymously is “experience-based learning” (e.g., Andresen et al., 2000; Kraft, 1990; Moore, 2010). Andresen, Boud and Cohen (2000, p. 225) proclaimed “the distinguishing feature of experience-based learning (or experiential learning) is that the experience of the learner occupies central place in all considerations of teaching and learning. This experience may comprise earlier events in the life of the learner, current life events, or those arising from the learner’s participation in activities implemented by teachers and facilitators. A key element of experience-based learning (henceforth referred to as EBL) is that learners analyse their experience by reflecting, evaluating and reconstructing it (sometimes individually, sometimes collectively, sometimes both) in order to draw meaning from it in the light of prior experience. This review of their experience may lead to further action.”

Katula and Threnhauser (1999, p. 240) labeled experiential learning as a “process that takes place beyond the traditional classroom and that enhances the personal and intellectual growth of the student. Such education can occur in a wide variety of settings, but it usually takes on a learn-by-doing aspect that engages the student directly in the subject, work or service involved.”

Work integrated learning is another term that is used widely to describe work related experience, it is “the intersection and engagement of theoretical and practice learning. The process of bringing together formal learning and productive work, or theory and practice. Constructing one system using available knowledge from several separate sources” (Cooper et al., 2010, p. xiii).

The National Society for Experiential Education (2013) included a list of eight principles for experiential learning activities: “*Intention*”, “*Preparedness*

and Planning”, “Authenticity”, “Reflection”, “Orientation and Training”, “Monitoring and Continuous Improvement”, “Assessment and Evaluation” and “Acknowledgment”.

1.2 The Interpretation and Practice of Experiential Learning from Teachers around the World

Many teachers have shared their understandings and experience of what experiential learning is in programme documents and course promotional material. In order to better apprehend teachers’ perceptions and appreciate their efforts in designing experiential learning activities, a list of quotes has been selectively collected from teachers through course information leaflets and videos around the world. By demonstrating a wide variety of approaches and experiences, this aims to shed some light on how teachers interpret experiential learning.

“Nowadays, Hong Kong society and teenagers do not lack knowledge and information. What we lack is the wisdom in applying knowledge, which is important for solving problems in different settings. Experiential learning provides the perfect opportunity for students in this regard.” Prof. Samson Tse (Dean of Student Affairs/Former Associate Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Hong Kong)

“At the end of the term when they present their projects to the class, the clients and other professors, I have the privilege of witnessing how much my students have matured. They have incredible pride and increased confidence in their work.” “Experiential learning and the opportunity to see my students thrive are priceless.” Prof. Meral Demirbag Büyükkurt (Professor in the Department of Supply Chain and Business Technology Management, The University of Concordia)

Anthony from the School of Public Health and Health Systems at the University of Waterloo takes her students out of the classroom so that they can have face-to-face conversations with Duff, a man who lived on the streets for more than three years. She also brings them to local shelters, and even to federal prisons. “It’s intense and personal. But I want students to know that it’s reality, it’s their world,”; “It’s also their place in the world and their responsibility as citizens to engage in the community,”; “I want my class to change the way students think about the world and about health. For better or worse, or better and worse, I want them to see the world, and their responsibilities in it, more clearly.” Ms. Kelly Anthony (Lecturer, School of Public Health and Health Systems, University of Waterloo)

“Experiential learning is intense and often messy, but that messiness helps students understand and master the concepts that they’re learning in the lecture hall.” Dr. Kate Trimble (Senior Associate Dean and Director, Office of Experiential Learning, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT)

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“Only so much can be taught, the rest must be learned through experience.” Dr. Adam Barsky (Edward Brown Award for Teaching Excellence recipient, Associate Professor, Faculty of Business and Economics, The University of Melbourne)

1.3 The Interpretation and Experience of Experiential Learning from Students around the World

With students being the “end-users,” their perceptions of these experiential learning activities are probably the most important. It has long been evidenced in educational research that students’ attitudes influence their motivation to engage in learning (Gardner, 1988). Prosser and Trigwell (1999) proclaimed that how students perceive their learning can determine the effectiveness of their academic learning. Their “Student Approaches to Learning” model proposes that students’ perception of the learning environment will influence their adaptation of a particular approach to learning (i.e. deep or surface approaches to learning), which in turn mediates the learning outcomes achieved.

Learning outcomes of experiential learning often focus on holistic competencies,¹ and scholars have been vocal about how students’ perceived importance of holistic competency development could affect their motivation to enhance these competencies (Chan & Luk, 2020; Chan, Zhao, & Luk, 2017). Students with more positive attitudes (e.g., enjoyment) demonstrate a higher level of engagement in experiential activities that lead to holistic competency development (Chan & Yeung, 2020). Thus, in the design of experiential learning activities, including assessment and feedback, it is vital to ensure a clear understanding and consideration of students’ perceptions. Any mismatch or large discrepancies in their understandings, expectations and actual experience may hinder the occurrence of learning and competency development. In light of that, a list of quotes has been collected from students around the world and compiled below to help readers conceive experiential learning through the lens of students’ unique angles and experiences.

“To me, experiential learning is to touch upon the real world, and to learn about what is said to be possible in the textbooks but rarely implemented perfectly in the real world.” And “I think my experiential learning experience was indeed a practical one, because I could apply what I have learnt from Public Administration, such as the collaborative dynamics between the government, the private sector and the third sector into my experiential learning experience.” Karen Chung (Student, Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Social Sciences, The University of Hong Kong)

“I have never felt more useful at university than my experience in the UNSW Human Rights Clinic. As someone not suited to conventional, classroom-style learning, the Human Rights Clinic allowed me to truly learn what it takes to start as a human rights lawyer, work in a team, and

learn from outstanding supervisors. I found the work to be extremely challenging, but always felt set up for success by the support provided by my peers and supervisors. Working specifically in migration law not only gave me a thorough understanding on a human rights issue that is always in the news, but improved my drafting and legal analysis. In all honesty, I think an experience like the HRC should be a compulsory part of a law degree.” Sam Koslowski (Student, 2018, Faculty of Law, University of New South Wales)

“I want to live in a community where people care about each other. If I want that, then I have to be that. Having an opportunity where I can get guidance from my professors and learn from mistakes before starting an articling position gives me comfort – when I go into articling, I’ll have the necessary experience to do a better job in an area that I wouldn’t have had practical work experience in.” (3rd year student, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, cited in Council of Ontario Universities, 2014)

“I think experiential learning is interactive, it is practical and also it is very professional, so that I can get a more holistic education because it not only enforces my understanding of the theories, but it also improves my core values and my generic skills that can come in handy in my career.” Molly Gu (Student, The University of Hong Kong)

“Over my one-semester abroad, I got the chance to make friends with people from all over the world. [...] What’s more, as a university student, I experienced the different teaching styles at Queen’s University and The Chinese University of Hong Kong. I do believe that I will become more proactive, considerate, and creative from now on, thanks to my experience as an exchange student.” (Student, Faculty of Science, Chinese University of Hong Kong)

“In fall of 2018, I went into Sustainability 350 not knowing what to expect. All I knew was that I would be required to volunteer at Ginkgo Organic Garden. What started out as ‘extra work’ quickly turned into an experience that changed my life. I learned about all the different areas of sustainability while committing myself to helping our environment. Lifelong friends were made, and I still volunteer on my own time because it makes me feel good to know I can make a difference. Help because you want to, not because you are being asked to. You will feel the change.” (Student, Human Resource Management programme, Roosevelt University, 2021)

1.4 Criticisms on Experiential Learning

There are a lot of ambiguities in the conceptualisations of the term “experiential learning,” particularly from the researchers’ perspectives. Researchers have argued that the conceptualisations of experiential learning are not robust enough to support the variety of factors that occur in learning by experience. Below I

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present some criticisms from researchers so that readers can receive an unbiased picture. Experiential learning

- tends to focus on retrospective reflection, fails to address the “here and now” experience (Vince, 1998);
- fails to account for social, political-cultural and institutional influences on the learning process (Reynolds, 1999);
- places too much emphasis on the role of the individual learner and decontextualises the learning process (Holman et al., 1997);
- does not take into consideration the role of a learner’s intention and desire in learning. The focus on cognitive reflection is simplistic (Britzman, 1998);
- does not account for the interaction between cognition and the environment, how each individual’s cognition converges with others, or “how individual knowledge co-emerges with collective knowledge” (Fenwick, 2000, p. 263).

Researchers who are interested in deepening their knowledge on the precise conceptualisation of the terms used for experiential learning and the criticisms that arise from them should consult the articles above.

1.5 Types of Experiential Learning

Experiential learning can be divided into two major categories – those occurring outside of the classroom known as field-based experiences, and those occurring inside the classroom, often during class time, known as classroom-based learning.

Field-Based Learning was first found integrated into higher education in the 1930s. Field-based learning includes experiences such as internships, clinical experiences, research and practical fellowships, apprenticeships, student exchanges, undergraduate research, practicums, cooperative education, service learning and community-based learning. Activities that bring together academic learning and practical application of theory such as internships, practicums, service learning and clinical experiences are also known as work integrated learning or work-based learning. While work integrated learning is increasingly becoming a distinct field of research and practice, it is fundamentally based on the principles of learning through reflection, making sense of experiences and situated learning (Cooper et al., 2010). Hence, work integrated or work-based learning activities are included as part of field-based experiential learning in this book.

Classroom-Based Learning can also be considered as experiential learning according to Lewis and Williams (1994). Classroom-based experiential learning includes role-playing, games, case studies, simulations, presentations, debates, discussions, hands-on technology and various types of group work. However, with the evolving nature of pedagogies, these types of experiential learning are now considered more as pedagogies for active learning.

In this book, I will mainly focus on the assessment of field-based experiential learning activities, although some assessment practices with a little bit of imagination

can also be used for classroom-based learning activities. Sometimes, there is no precise boundary in categorising the types of experiential learning activities.

1.6 Benefits of Experiential Learning to Different Stakeholders

Depending on whose perspectives you are adopting, there will be different benefits associated with experiential learning. There now exist ample funding opportunities for universities, communities, corporations, teachers and even students to propose diverse learning experiences. Shell Canada, an oil and gas company, initiated the Shell Canada's Campus Ambassador Programme that offers funding for students in many Canadian universities to provide opportunities for their hands-on experience (Dalhousie University, 2015; University of Alberta, 2021; University of British Columbia, 2014; University of Calgary, 2016). The packages may include cash rewards and subsidies for travelling and activities organised by clubs and societies, with the priorities given to ones with objectives to improve students' educational experience in relevant areas of Shell's business (e.g., engineering, energy, sustainable energy, environment and economy issues), as well as opportunities to engage with the community at large. At the University of Hong Kong, experiential learning is a graduation requirement, and undergraduate students must engage in one overseas and one Mainland China learning experience to broaden their horizons and promote internationalisation (The University of Hong Kong, 2021). Support and funding resources for faculties and students to experience "educationally rich" real-life problem-solving activities (Gallant Ho Experiential Learning Centre, 2021) are available. The University of Hong Kong also provides teaching development grants for teachers to design projects and activities that will have an impact on the strategic development and promotion of teaching and learning; and experiential learning is marked as a priority area and a distinctive feature of the University's undergraduate curriculum. Residential colleges are often allocated funding resources for experiential learning, enabling residents to organise programmes that benefit competency development. At the University of Macau, a full residential collegiate system similar to that of Oxford, Cambridge and Yale has been implemented. Ample experiential learning activities are organised within the residential colleges to build competencies such as leadership, citizenship with global outlooks and teamwork (University of Macau, 2021).

With abundant schemes funded by governments, corporations and universities, grant proposers often require the applicants to identify benefits associated with their proposed projects. In this section, I provide a comprehensive list of possible benefits for different stakeholders in their proposals, using appropriate teaching and learning terminologies.

Benefits for Universities (Boose, 2004; Faculty of Health University of York, n.d.; Fenton & Gallant, 2016; Ngai, 2006; Panet al., 2018; University of New Brunswick, 2014)

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- Increase student recruitment and retention by deepening student experiences;
- Enhance reputation among students in the network of employers;
- Promote university's image as socially responsible, in particular when students are involved in community and service learning;
- Maintain network with alumni through partnership with their companies;
- Increase graduate employment as students are better prepared for work, and may even secure employment opportunities during internships, fellowships and services, etc.;
- Secure partnership opportunities and financial support from community or corporate partners;
- Publicise their pedagogical innovation which may lead to further government funding;
- Develop international network;
- Enhance university reputation by promoting diverse active authentic pedagogies.

Benefits for Teachers (Boose, 2004; Cantor, 1995; Faculty of Health University of York, n.d.; Fenton & Gallant, 2016; Ngai, 2006; Pan et al., 2018; University of New Brunswick, 2014)

- Reignite teacher's love of teaching as they provide meaningful education to students;
- Learn new approaches to interact with students;
- Apply new pedagogical approaches to students who have non-traditional learning styles;
- Guide students to achieve a deeper understanding of course concepts and their applications;
- Enhance and maintain student engagement, motivation and participation, which in turn lead to teacher fulfilment;
- Obtain rich data, research insights and connections which are possibly useful for future research;
- Enhance teacher satisfaction as experiential learning often gives teachers greater satisfaction than traditional teaching approaches;
- Provide opportunities for teachers to meet with potential research industrial partners;
- Senior management often values teachers who have industrial and community network;
- Often attract funding opportunities and even teaching award recognition due to the innovativeness and workload of experiential learning.

Benefits for Students (Boose, 2004; Faculty of Health University of York, n.d.; Fenton and Gallant, 2016; Ngai, 2006; Pan et al., 2018; University of New Brunswick, 2014)

- Enhance academic motivation and engagement through bridging the gap between academic knowledge and the authentic world, hence encouraging self-directed learning;

- Increase clarity about academic goals and career expectations;
- Appreciate other cultures and people from different backgrounds;
- Develop professional networks and gain potential employment opportunities;
- Gain real-world experiences, obtain information on selected career fields and build network;
- Enhance holistic competencies (including cognitive competencies, values and attitudes) as well as specific skills (technical and professional skills);
- Develop self-confidence and maturity;
- Improve academic performance.

Studies have shown modest or no differences between students with experiential learning experiences and those without (Strage, 2000). Although it is often reflected that experiential learning students outperform non-experiential learning students in the same course (Freeman et al., 2014), it is unfair to say all types of experiential learning benefit students in terms of their academic performances. Moreover, even if experiential learning improves students' grades, it is unlikely due to the enhanced mastery of course knowledge, but a deeper understanding and a better application of academic knowledge in the real world (Eyler & Halteman, 1981, as cited in Strage, 2000) and an improved attitude towards learning.

1.7 Primary Purposes of Experiential Learning – Enhancing Student Learning

Experiential learning brings together student learning opportunities that are otherwise difficult to provide in a normal classroom setting. The primary benefits are that it enhances student learning in areas of “relevancy,” “holistic competency development,” “reflection,” “meaningful feedback,” “value mistakes” and “actual experience”.

Relevancy – students often criticise the university curriculum for being irrelevant to the real-world for example, “too many theories, not enough practice,” “too conceptual,” “teachers do not know what is going on in the real-world,” “my professor is still teaching me something that was used twenty years ago” – these criticisms can be found in many student experience evaluation reports in universities. Teachers are sometimes bounded by policies of the accreditation bodies or universities and may find it difficult to introduce a curriculum which is more “authentic” and “relevant.” Experiential learning differs in that it allows students to take what they have learnt and apply them first-hand. The learning processes, either good or bad, are more meaningful for them as they experience them and develop their own relevance.

Holistic Competency Development – In a classroom, students are often given known solutions to problems, but in life, most problems are ill-defined and some may not even have solutions. Experiential learning trains students to be creative, to think critically, to work in teams (in most of our lifetime, we work in teams: as parents, as siblings and as teammates), to solve problems, to find ways to deal

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with oneself and be resilient if the problems do not have solutions. Thus, holistic competencies are not just for students' careers, but more importantly, for their personal life. Competency development is much more feasible in experiential learning activities for students to make meaning out of it.

Guide by Reflection – experiential learning encourages spontaneous and intentional reflection that is not necessarily by design. For example, when students work with each other in a community project at an elderly home, they witness and experience something unfamiliar to them. Some may go home and reflect on what they witnessed, others may even discuss with each other the issues that impressed or confused them. In a classroom, this kind of reflection is rare unless by design. By the nature of experiential learning activities, it is common for the learners to reflect, hence better understanding the concepts, theories and situations to which they are exposed. Such reflection will guide their learning.

Meaningful Feedback – in most experiential learning theories or frameworks, feedback is often dismissed. In the classroom, teachers can provide, or assign a person to provide feedback, resulting in a more defined process. The person providing feedback may be the teacher, the tutor, a peer or even the student themselves. In experiential learning, this is less defined. Coming back from an elderly home community project, discussions among students provide them with valuable peer feedback; students who go home and talk to their parents may also receive feedback from them. The feedback received is often not generated intentionally in a formulaic manner, but rather organically through the day-to-day experiential learning experience that students have lived. To ensure high-quality feedback, teachers can design experiential learning activities that include innovative feedback mechanisms such as peer mentoring.

Mistakes are Valuable – In life, trial and error cannot be avoided. Students should be given opportunities to make mistakes, to learn not to fear them, but to find value in them instead. The process of learning is more important than the results. Experiential learning allows that.

Actual Experience – Practice makes perfect – that is a fact. Each student has unique prior experiences and personalities, and how they interpret and interact with their experience varies. In experiential learning, teachers and parents have to learn how to let go and allow our students to learn and develop by experiencing. That is the actual value within experiential learning.

1.8 Challenges of Experiential Learning to Different Stakeholders

Following the list of benefits of experiential learning, a list of challenges is provided below for grant reviewers and different stakeholders to make aware of the challenges that they may face if experiential learning activities are to be implemented.

Challenges for Universities (Fenton and Gallant, 2016; Pan, Seow, and Koh, 2018)

- Experiential learning is often resource- and labour-intensive; universities need to invest in hiring relevant professionals, develop partnerships and provide support for professional development;
- Significant structural changes in the curriculum, which leads to a large amount of administrative work;
- Safety measures and insurance need to be put in place;
- Tensions between the call for the development of experiential education and the emphasis on research and publications.

Challenges for Teachers (Austin & Rust, 2015; Fenton & Gallant, 2016; Pan et al., Koh, 2018)

- Accommodate changes in long-standing teaching practices;
- Workload often concentrates on the organisation of the activity;
- Constant and unexpected changes may arise in the course of the activity;
- More guidance for students is needed;
- More time commitment and workload required, especially when the curriculum is first implemented;
- Difficulties in ensuring the quality of experiential learning programmes and the delivery of learning outcomes;
- Tensions between research and heavier workload for experiential education;
- Difficulties in developing mechanisms for assessment and evaluation, such as setting assessment rubrics and maintaining consistency;
- The teacher's role is different in experiential learning activities and they have less control.

Challenges for Students (Fenton & Gallant, 2016; Pan et al. 2018)

- More time and effort required than the conventional mode of learning;
- Frustration with new teaching and learning styles, different learning environments and unfamiliar assessment standards;
- More responsibility for their own learning;
- Some students may be unable to understand the benefits of experiential learning or why they are participating in some activities;
- Students (both high or low performance) often dislike group work and collaboration (Chang & Brickman, 2018; Matthews, 1992).

Benefits seem to outweigh challenges for different stakeholders, particularly for students, to enhance learning. The weight of each challenge may differ depending on the individual university, teacher and student. Only the individual stakeholder can judge this weight and consider if the cost of challenges outweighs that of benefits for them.