

Experiential Learning in Higher Education

Experiential Learning - the core
philosophy of education at University
of Maryland University College (UMUC)



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UMUC.EDU

Plan for the Presentation

- Introduce UMUC
- Discuss distance learning
- Address the theories of experiential learning
- Talk about the old UMUC learning model
- Talk about the new UMUC learning model
- Discuss applying the new model
- Implications for the faculty
- Implications for the students
- Questions & discussion

University of Maryland University College

University of Maryland University College (UMUC)



University of Maryland University College

UMUC Mission

The mission of University of Maryland University College is improving the lives of adult learners. We will accomplish this by:

- Operating as Maryland's open university, serving working adults, military servicemen and servicewomen and their families, and veterans who reside in Maryland, across the United States, and around the world;
- Providing our students with affordable, open access to valued, quality higher education; and

University of Maryland University College

UMUC Mission

- Serving as a recognized leader in career-relevant education, embracing innovation and change aligned with our purpose and sharing our perspectives and expertise.

University of Maryland University College

Background information:

- Founded in 1947 as a branch of UM College Park
- Open enrollment university
- Europe – 1949, Asia 1956
- In 1970 UMUC became an independent degree-granting institution within the University System of Maryland
- 140 locations on four continents

University of Maryland University College

Background information:

- Bachelors, masters and doctoral degrees
- 90 individual degrees, specializations and certificates
- About 975 distinct online courses
- 80% of registrations are online
- Largest four-year public university in the USA
- About 90,000 students
- 75% of undergraduates work full time

Distance Education

At UMUC we are focusing on distance learning and experiential learning . Through distance education, we expect to:

- expand the opportunity for quality higher education through the distance education system;
- produce competent academicians and professionals who are able to compete globally;
- increase participation in continuing education in order to create a knowledge-based society;

Distance Education

- to increase the quality and quantity of research and development in the distance education system, especially in distance higher education;
- to innovatively and continuously disseminate and share information on distance education especially on distance higher education;
- to strengthen national unity and integrity through the broad and equal provision of higher education;

Distance Education

- to increase cross-cultural understanding and networking through local, national and global partnerships;
- to produce academic products in distance higher education as well as in other fields of knowledge.

Adult Learners

University of Maryland University College (UMUC) average student age is 31

Universitas Terbuka average student age is about 30

We are both working with a large percentage of adults in our student body

Adult students bring a range of educational, work, and personal experiences to their studies

Adult Learners

We believe that all learners respond well to experiential learning and that this is particularly true of adult learners.

Experiential learning calls for a focus on active learning and authentic assessment versus the traditional “read, discuss, test” model of higher education.

Adult Learners

Adult learners appreciate knowing:

- How theory is applied to practice
- How knowledge translates to action
- How what they are learning relates to success (Knowles, 1984)

Adult Learners

Adult learners, learn best when:

- They are active partners in their education
- They have the freedom to make mistakes and receive feedback
- When the focus is on solving problems

Mastering content is necessary but students also need to learn for applying that content (Keeton, 1976)

Adult Learners

At UMUC we believe that adults should learn from:

- Informed doing
- Applying their skills and knowledge
- Continuous practice
- Problem solving
- Collaboration and working in groups
- Faculty that provide supportive coaching and feedback

Experiential Learning

“Experiential learning” encompasses an extraordinarily diverse field of theory and practice, and there is no single definition even of its key term – experience (Roberts 2012).

Experiential Learning

One broadly applicable definition might be that experiential learning is the change that occurs when a person reflects upon his or her experience, and when these reflections result in new knowledge and applications (Itin 1999)

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning:

- Is a process
- Learners apply their experience and new knowledge to new situations
- Learners apply theory and knowledge to authentic real-world situations

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning:

- It can involve learning
 - In the classroom – project based learning
 - Outside of the classroom
 - Service learning
 - Cooperative learning
 - Internships

Experiential Learning

In experiential learning student's should:

- Be resented with new situations
- Deal with increasingly complex challenges
- Receive guidance, support and feedback from the faculty
- Actively reflect on their learning

Experiential Learning – Step #1

UMUC's first foray away from the traditional learning model;

Read>Discuss >Test was to move to substitute Authentic Assessments for tests and exams. Prior to this we typically had a mid-term exam, a couple of projects and a final exam.

Experiential Learning – Step #1

We transitioned to Assessments that represented real world assignments and were not completed over time using all available resources.

Tests were eliminated.

The objective was to allow students to demonstrate that they could use the learning they had gained in the course – not simply play back content.

Experiential Learning – Step #1

Authentic Assessments:

- The introductory marketing course has two short case studies and then a two part marketing plan.
- The international business course has two exercises focused on market research and then a two part international expansion plan

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Authentic Assessment examples from Global Public Management:

- Mini case analysis (six in the course)
- Major case analysis
- Final Assessment
 - An analysis of a public project
 - Development of an implementation plan for a public project in an actual country

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Mini case analysis

You earn your living helping businesses and organizations implement strategic planning. It's often hard to do, but it pays well.

You have just been asked to address a group of public sector organizations, including government agencies, IGOs, and NGOs. They are interested in strategic planning but do not currently undertake any strategic planning. You want their business.

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Mini case analysis - *continued*

To support your presentation, you want to give the group examples of why strategic planning makes sense for different types of organizations.

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Mins case analysis - *continued*

- Think of two (2) specific reasons why each of the following organizations should use strategic planning. The reasons need to relate to what you believe to be their mission and issues.
 - a. Governor's Office of Homeland Security
 - b. The World Bank
 - c. The International Committee of the Red Cross(www.icrc.org)
 - d. The Department of Foreign Affairs in Turkey

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Case Study

Select a public sector issue of personal interest, chose two countries. Compare and contrast each countries' handling of the issue and offer your own reasoned recommendation on how you feel the issue should be handled by both countries.

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Case Study - *continued*

Merely agreeing with how one country handles the issue is not sufficient. Your opinion on how you feel each country should handle the issue is very important part of the case study as it shows additional research and analysis that goes beyond how the countries are handling the issue. Support your recommendation.

Think of paper as an outsider going into each country and making educated recommendations on how they can improve their handling of the issue.

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Final assessment

This assignment asks you to conduct the research necessary to carry out an important public sector project.

Step #1: Select, research and discuss a common public sector project for example: providing a sustainable source of potable water, a program to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, micro investment, improving food safety, access to primary education, resettlement of refugees etc. countries.

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Final assessment - *continued*

Step #2: Select a real country or region for example: West Africa, Middle East, Cambodia etc. for which the project would be appropriate and explain why the need exists.

Authentic Assessment – Global Public Management

Final Assessment – *continued*

- Step #3: Review the information that has been gathered, assume the role of a government project manager in the selected country or region and
 - develop an implementation plan for the program including at a minimum the finance, human resources and marketing activities; and
 - Consider any potentially helpful IGOs and NGOs and what their role may be.

Experiential Learning – Step #2

The Authentic Assessment initiative has been successful in terms of student learning and outcomes.

However, it did not fully recognize or incorporate what we know about what we have learned and are learning about Experiential learning.

Origins of Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning has its origins at least as far back as the European Enlightenment

In the modern era, John Dewey is generally acknowledged as a foundational proponent (Roberts, 2112)

Dewey believed :

Learning is iterative and requires engagement in real life experiences

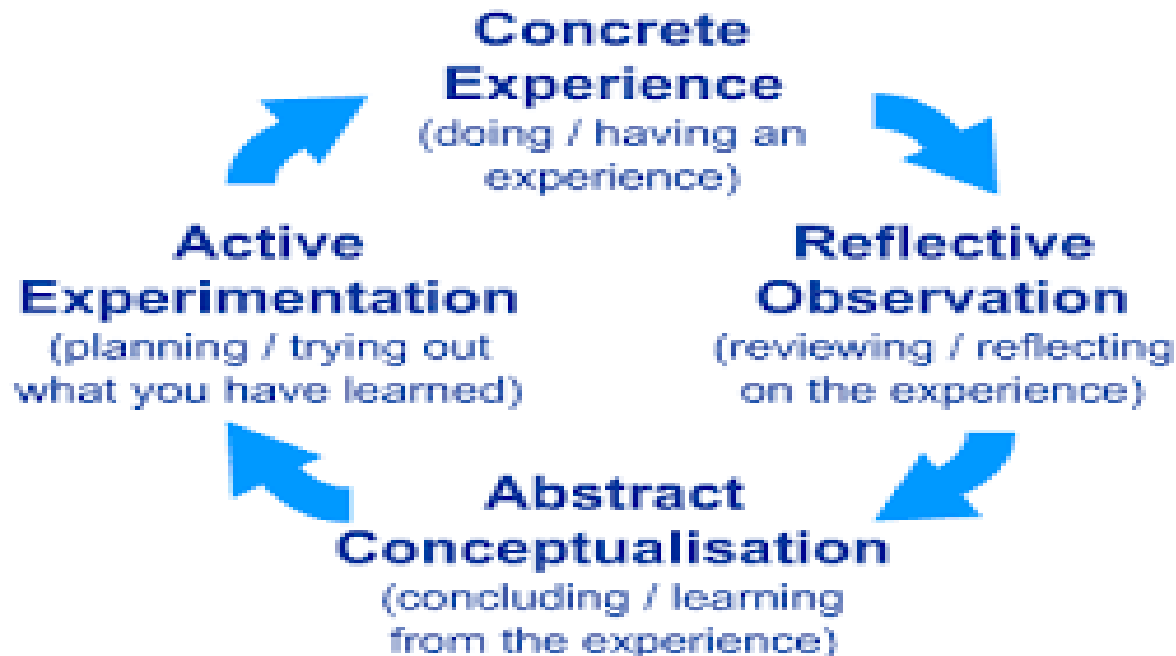
Learning requires continuity and structure

Optimally, there is a carefully designed program, guided reflection on experience and overall coherence (Dewey, 1938)

Origins of Experiential Learning Theory

Daniel Kolb saw learning as an ongoing process, a product of experience plus active reflection (Kolb, 1984)

Kolb's four



UMUC Learning Model

The UMUC model builds on research on adult education and experiential learning and adds additional dimensions:

Experiential learning

+

Mastery learning

Taxonomies of learning

Theories of social learning

UMUC Learning Model

Mastery learning

- As a methodology, mastery learning dates to Benjamin Bloom's research in the 1970/80's
- Bloom believed that time, support and a structured learning process would help students achieve a high level of mastery of a subject (Bloom, 1971)

UMUC Learning Model

Mastery learning

- Bloom also reported that in research, the mastery learning produced final achievement which was a full standard deviation (1 Sigma) better than a control group which was taught in the conventional way. (Bloom, 1984)

UMUC Learning Model

Mastery learning (continued)

- Mastery requires:
 - Proficiency in a learning objective before the student progresses to the next stage
 - Frequent assessment and feedback
 - Time to completion is individual

UMUC Learning Model

Mastery learning (continued)

- In the mastery process, a student's "failure" is "not their" fault, it is a sign that there is a flaw in instruction (Kulik & Kulik, 1990)
- UMUC's model calls for engaging, real world projects. Mastery is defined by how well students can complete these projects

UMUC Learning Model

Taxonomy (Blooms)

UMUC's model reflects "Bloom's taxonomy" of cognitive development which calls for:

- Progressively higher orders of thinking
- Step by step progress from simple to more complex abilities and skills

UMUC's model encompasses the taxonomy by looking at an entire program rather than an individual course.

UMUC Learning Model

Social & active learning

Social learning is the active process of establishing connections and constructing knowledge (von Glasersfeld, 1995)

The UMUC model calls for projects to:

- Incorporate student's past experiences
- Allow development opportunities for discussion and reflection
- Active dialog with faculty
- Faculty guidance

UMUC Learning Model

Social & active learning - *continued*

- Carefully constructed projects that are broken down into steps that allow for interaction with faculty and peers (active learning)

The Program

- Design starts with the entire program
- The program approach insures that the student has one cohesive journey

UMUC Learning Model

UMUC's program designs are based on *Learning Goals, Competencies & Evaluation Criteria.*

Learning Goals can come from:

Professional standards

Certification Requirements

The requirements for standardized tests

“Gold Standard” Recommendations from educational or industry associations

Employers

Program Knowledge

UMUC Learning Model

Learning Goal Examples:

- Resolve information technology (IT) system problems and meet the needs of end-users by applying industry best practices.
- Develop communication skills to facilitate decision making and collaboration among employees
- Apply quality standards to deliver a high level of patient satisfaction and manage risk

UMUC Learning Model

Competencies:

Competencies represent the learning the student must be able to demonstrate in order to complete the program.

Competencies are those abilities and skills that an employer would expect of a graduate in their chosen field of study

Said another way: If students master the competencies by the end of the program, the program would graduate the most capable and relevant (and compelling) graduates anywhere.

UMUC Learning Model

Competency Examples

1. Resolve information technology (IT) system problems and meet the needs of end-users by applying industry best practices.

2.1 Assess the need for computer system hardware to support business needs

1.. Develop communication skills to facilitate decision making and collaboration among employees

1.1 Apply communication skills to convey ideas and information to others in an effort to maximize organizational effectiveness

UMUC Learning Model

Evaluation Criteria

- describe what mastery of the competency looks like - the exact way that both the student and the teacher will know whether or not the student's action is demonstrating mastery of the learning described by the competency.
- Should not require additional bullet points underneath to define.
- Are shown to the student, and evaluated by faculty

UMUC Learning Model

Evaluation Criteria

5.1 Apply communication skills to convey ideas and information to others in an effort to maximize organizational effectiveness

5.5.1 Identify the characteristics of good communication skills

5.5.2 Assess personal level of communication skills

5.5.3 Describe barriers to interpersonal communication

5.5.4 Interpret nonverbal signals and oral communication

5.5.5 Develop visual representations of data

5.5.7 Employ effective communication skills across cultural boundaries

UMUC Learning Model

The Project

- The basic educational unit is the project
- Courses may have one or several projects
 - Real-world scenarios
 - Students demonstrate what they know and can do
 - Students apply the experience they have acquired
 - Students apply new knowledge gained from course material that is include in the project and linked to each task.
 - Feedback helps student refine their work and progress to mastery

UMUC Learning Model

The Project Components

Scenario – Story to position the assignments and provide helpful background

- Description of the organization
- Organizational situation, financial etc.
- Student's role, e.g. newly promoted manager

Assignment - determine if XYZ Inc. should expand internationally.

UMUC Learning Model

The Project Components

Assignment- *continued*

- First task, e.g. assess the financial and human capital of the organization to determine if there is sufficient strength to support international expansion. Write a report that includes your analysis and recommendation.

Learning material

- A annotated list of sources of information and learning that will help the student master the assignment. They could be an article(s), video, textual material etc.

UMUC Learning Model

Learning material- continued

- A annotated list of sources of information and learning that will help the student master the assignment. They could be an article(s), video, textual material etc.
 - Links to each source
 - Assessment rubric

Experiential Learning – Impact on Faculty

A key to the success of the UMUC Model is the student – faculty relationship

- Faculty:
 - Set high expectations
 - Draw on their knowledge to help student understand the relevance of their project work
 - Provide frequent feedback

Experiential Learning – Impact on Faculty

A key to the success of the UMUC Model is the student – faculty relationship

- To help students progress, faculty will:
 - Assess the student’s current knowledge
 - Help students relate their existing experience to new learning and the task they have been assigned
 - Provide a “Safe” environment where its OK to fail

Experiential Learning – Impact on Faculty

Faculty have to provide a new type of feedback

- Help students learn for themselves without giving them the answers, i.e. coach not correct
- Said another way: move from the traditional “Sage on the stage” to the “Guide on the side”.

Experiential Learning – Impact on Faculty

Faculty have to provide a new type of feedback

Example:

Old model: Your assessment of the firm's financial resources and their ability to support international expansion did not address the risk that current operations might need more financial support than they do today.

Experiential Learning – Impact on Faculty

Faculty have to provide a new type of feedback

Example:

New model: Your assessment of the firm's financial resources and their ability to support international expansion was not complete. I suggest that you review the “Streeter” article and the video “The risks of over extending financial commitments” and then re-submit the financial analysis.

Experiential Learning – Impact on Students

Foundational Experience

Each student is given projects that help develop their Core Competencies so that they have the tools to become self-directed and self-reflective learners

- The Graduate School (TGS) Core Learning Goals
 1. Communicate clearly in writing and speaking
 2. Critical thinking and analysis
 3. Quantitative reasoning
 4. Leadership, facilitation and collaboration

Experiential Learning – Impact on Students

Foundational Experience - *continued*

- TGS concentrates on the Core in a required introductory course and then addresses the various Core Competencies throughout each program

Experiential Learning – Impact on Students

Foundational Experience - *continued*

- The Undergraduate School (TUS) Core Learning Goals
 1. Analytic inquiry
 2. Use of information resources
 3. Engaging Diverse Perspectives
 4. Ethical reasoning
 5. Quantitative Reasoning
 6. Communicative Fluency
 7. Organize and implement a career map and self-marketing plan

Experiential Learning – Impact on Students

Foundational Experience - *continued*

- TUS starts the Core education in the General Education Program (40 credits) and then adapts the Core learning in each major.

Experiential Learning – Impact on Students

Program design

In 1938, Dewey recognized that an experientially based program would call for far more attention to design than a conventional program (Dewey, 1938).

In 1938, educators did not have the tools to design such a comprehensive program. Today, technology and learner analytics have enabled us to do it.

- Technology – Online work can be monitored and evaluated
- Learner analytics – today we can track student's progress, their strengths and their weaknesses

Experiential Learning – Impact on Students

Program Design- *continued*

In the future, we envision:

- An initial student assessment
- Individualized degree plan
- Continuous support
- Adoption of innovative technologies such as:
 - Adaptive learning
 - Data analytics/Predictive Analytics
 - Targeted tutoring

Experiential Learning – Impact on Students

The development of the experientially based learning model at UMUC is based on decades of research on adult education.

Over time the learning model will evolve toward truly personalized learning for all students – just as Dewey envisioned. (Blume, Klose, Hansen, Prineas, Underwood, 2016)

Thank you!

Questions?

Suggested Reading

Ambrose, S. A., Bridges, M. W., DiPietro, M., Lovett, M. C., & Norman, M. K. (2010). *How learning works: Seven research-based principles for smart teaching*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Resources supporting this book can be found at the Carnegie-Mellon University website at: <http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/index.html>

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Kearney, S. P., & Perkins, T. (2014). Engaging Students through Assessment: The Success and Limitations of the ASPAL (Authentic Self and Peer Assessment for Learning) Model. *Journal Of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, 11(3), 1-14.

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