EXPANDING THE EXPLORATION OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING: INTRODUCTION TO THE 4TH VOLUME

Cheryl Jeffs, Britney M. Paris

University of Calgary

A bold commitment to EL positions UCalgary to be a leader in Canada, making learning-by-doing a cornerstone of the UCalgary experience.
   University of Calgary (2020)

At the annual 2019 University of Calgary Conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching presenters and over 200 delegates shared their insights, experiences, and research on experiential learning (EL) in the classroom be it physical or virtual, a laboratory, clinical, field experience, or community placement. No matter the definition, perspective, or application of EL in higher education, this volume of Papers on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching (PPLT) expands on the conference theme of Exploring Experiential Learning and the commitment of the University of Calgary (2020).

Dr. Norah McRae, the featured keynote speaker, began the discussion and set the stage for exploring experiential learning. She outlined models and a framework for work-integrated learning and challenged conference delegates to critically examine, explore, and expand on the scholarship and practice of teaching and experiential learning.

This 4th volume of PPLT contains 13 diverse papers from disciplines in archeology, business, chemistry, nursing, social work, and academic development. The authors each address the question "how do we transform education to spark curiosity, drive innovation and prepare students to thrive in their chosen careers?" (Conference on Postsecondary Learning and Teaching, 2019).

While reading this volume, you will find various definitions, perspectives, and applications of EL including contributions from Rachel Braun, and Iffat Naeem and Fabiola E. Aparicio-Ting who set the EL landscape by introducing a definition of EL and offer both an institutional and graduate perspective of EL. Several authors present their work on game-based curriculum in EL and offer a range of activities from diverse disciplines (Shauna Schechtel, Vivian Mozol, Marissa Clapson, Brian Gilbert, Judy Tran, & Stephen White; Megan Bylsma; Tarryn Bourhill & Derrick Rancourt). The notion of design thinking is explored by Willian Gatti Junior, Emily Marasco, Beaumie Kim, and Laleh Behjat, and Rose Bene and Elizabeth McNeilly. Experiential learning activities are applied to discovering the past in archeology (Kelsey Pennanen and Lynnita-Jo Guillet) and learning for the future (Kassem Ayman Omar and Vivian Mozol). This volume of PPLT also features authors expanding on curriculum development and documenting EL outcomes through curriculum mapping with articles from Sandra Hirst, Rebecca Stares, and Carole-Lynne LeNavenec; Lorelli Nowell, Kimberley Grant, Carol Berenson, Patti Dyjur, Cheryl

Correspondence – tipplt@ucalgary.ca

Jeffs, Patrick Kelly, Natasha Kenny, and Kiara Mikita; Nina Frampton, Angelique Jenney, and Jessica Shaw; and, Patricia Dyjur, Rachel Braun, Kevin Saito, and Erin Kaipanen.

SETTING THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING LANDSCAPE

There are multiple definitions of, perspectives on, and approaches to EL. In her paper, Rachel Braun provides a comprehensive overview of EL and shares the definition adopted for her work. She presents the discussion from her conference session and identifies five emerging features of the EL landscape that further support an institutional environmental scan. Braun posed the question "what emerging and recurring features and desired supports for the EL landscape do participants hypothesize as relevant to their roles, scholarship, or teaching practice?" These are identified as scholarly teaching, value systems, balancing disciplinary norms, valuing teaching and learning, and push back. Readers will appreciate the discussion on how faculty and staff have identified strengths, challenges and desired supports for EL within their institution and have time to reflect on 'what's next for experiential learning".

Moving from the institutional level, Iffat Naeem and Fabiola E. Aparicio-Ting explore the graduate perspective in seeking, incorporating, and learning from meaningful community-based learning (CBL). They explore the concepts of positionality (self-identify) and mindful inquiry (interests, career aspirations and skills) as foundational to the experience. Barriers to implement CBL into graduate programs were identified as academic schedules, institutional procedures, available opportunities, and clarity in the process. They conclude EL is a necessary element of graduate education and encourage us to further explore resolutions to barriers that ensure CBL activities are incorporated.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING GAME-BASED APPLICATIONS

Several papers explored the notion of game-based applications in EL. Shauna Schechtel, Vivian Mozol, Marissa Clapson, Brian Gilbert, Judy Tran, and Stephen White began with the question, "could one create a puzzle-based activity that is a blend of experiential and active learning for large postsecondary classrooms and what are the benefits of doing so?" They provide an in-depth description of the development of the puzzle, with a focus on student engagement in the creation of the puzzles. After the study, they report "…over 400 puzzles were constructed, solved, and assessed…" Students and instructors reflected on the process and the authors describe the pros and cons of the activities. Overall, they found the puzzles were effective in student engagement and that students took responsibility for their learning. Furthermore, they suggest that this type of EL activity can be conducted in large classes.

Megan Bylsma offers a unique perspective of a High Impact Practice (HIP) game based on actual historical content, Reacting to the Past. She asks, "what if there was a way to approach hands-on learning through universal designed approaches, so students had a way to gain success and remember the content?" With applications to many disciplines, students learn by immersion into the lives, experiences, and events of real characters. There are no game pieces other than students and historical facts, with direction from the instructor. Bylsma offers a detailed account of several scenarios that demonstrate active learning through immersion and how instructors can incorporate this method into their classrooms. Similar to other accounts in this volume,

implementing Reacting to the Past engages students, and encourages them to take responsibility for their learning.

Another game application is illustrated through the application of a simple, yet effective low-tech approach to EL. Tarryn Bourhill and Derrick Rancourt write about the process and impact of informational interviews. This method, emerging from career development, involves a novice or new learner inviting an experienced practitioner to an interview to discuss their experiences and insight into a particular occupation. The intent is not job seeking, but an EL opportunity for students. In addition to the information interview assignment, a game activity "crazy interview" is introduced. The benefit to this game activity is described as moving students "…out of their comfort zone and into their courage zone…" to "…prevent students from entering the Terror Zone." Bourhill and Rancourt conclude combining the two EL assignments provide a real experience for students that enhances their careers, and suggest these activities can be adapted by any discipline.

DESIGN THINKING AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Willian Gatti Junior, Emily Marasco, Beaumie Kim, and Laleh Behjat combine a game-based activity with the concepts of design thinking, broadly defined as an approach to creatively solve problems. The selected board game, Entrepreneurial Thinking, is based on real-life economic events and was developed to "…support the cognitive aspect of design thinking…" A detailed description of the board-game is provided and they claim the "…game follows a model that strikes a balance concerning playability and learning objectives." After experiencing the game, students are asked to redesign it, providing an opportunity for developing design-thinking skills which enhances deeper learning. The instructors also benefited from this activity and report on their teaching development through this process. We are left with questions about implementing this game in large classes and also how to authentically assess learning.

A related article by Rose Bene and Elizabeth McNeilly expands on the concept of design thinking in an education course with the awareness that not all students work well in a collaborative situation. They explored the question, "could the design thinking process be used to foster collaboration among students and encourage radical collaboration"? The authors provide a substantial introduction to design thinking and the concept of radical collaboration. They intentionally incorporate radical collaboration (self-awareness) to create a controlled uncomfortableness to challenge students in the learning process. Bene and McNeilly provided a detailed account of the team-building process and conclude design thinking and radical collaboration is effective in establishing collaboration.

The next papers demonstrate the broad applications of EL – from an archaeology exploration of Indigenous ancestors to the 21st century of educational technologies.

Kelsey Pennanen and Lynnita-Jo Guillet explore the past through a thoughtful and pragmatic paper on archaeology as a means towards reconciliation and the Calls to Action by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. They provide us with a structured plan that illustrates how archeology concepts can be and were applied in a local community including the Siksika Nation, University of Calgary's Department of Anthropology and Archaeology field school, the Calgary Foundation and the Archaeological Society of Alberta. Defined as "learning

through thinking, perceiving, and experiences of the land…" high school students, graduate students, instructors, and community members participated in classroom and field activities to excavate a site within the Blackfoot Crossing Historical Park. Through feedback, learning was evident for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students and one of the most significant outcomes was the development of collaboration. Not everyone will have the opportunity or means for an archaeology excavation, yet, based on their experience, the authors encourage others to consider and adopt EL programs to foster Indigenous relationships, reconciliation, and student learning.

Kassem Ayman Omar and Vivian Mozol take us to the future of technology for students to experience and develop their spatial ability. In this paper, the authors focus on a chemistry program, however, spatial ability is a skill requirement for many disciplines and their findings provide an overview of potential EL adaptations, the importance of questioning our established learning activities, and consider incorporating newer technologies. The focus of their research was to explore new technology to enhance learning, specifically spatial ability, and compare it to a traditional method. They report the traditional method and the new technologies both enhanced spatial ability, and conclude newer technologies may be the best solution because of the students' experience with and their "affinity to technology".

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND CURRICULUM MAPPING: EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

With the call for the inclusion of EL activities within the national, provincial and local levels (University of Calgary, 2020), the next papers explore how EL curriculum is developed, incorporated, and mapped in a course or program.

Sandra Hirst, Rebecca Stares, and Carole-Lynne LeNavenec demonstrate how a scoping review was a start to address their questions about social entrepreneurship curriculum in health care. They argue this focus will enhance the University of Calgary's vision for entrepreneurial thinking and EL opportunities. The scoping review identified curriculum content to build social and economic knowledge and skills in leadership, critical thinking, business, and sustainability. While this is a preliminary step in the process, it moves forward-thinking about EL opportunities to support student learning and prepare health care workers for the future.

Lorelli Nowell, Kimberley Grant, Carol Berenson, Patti Dyjur, Cheryl Jeffs, Patrick Kelly, Natasha Kenny, and Kiara Mikita describe how a certificate program for graduate students and postdoctoral scholars was developed and implemented. Developing teaching skills in higher education is the focus of this robust program and participants had the opportunity for many EL activities to practice throughout the program. A program evaluation revealed that the majority of participants "…feel more prepared in teaching skills and will be able to apply their learning in further teaching opportunities" which is an expected outcome of EL. The authors encourage other higher education institutions to include EL in teaching development and demonstrate the value of such programs.

Nina Frampton, Angelique Jenney, and Jessica Shaw identified a need to incorporate EL in the Faculty of Social Work specifically related to the concept of research. They explored the question "…how the implementation of practice-based research into social work research

courses and research practica could enhance social work students' EL at the University of Calgary." A project began with a community-based research partner and included focus groups with students. They identified themes as students' fear of research, expressed interest in making research a practical experience, and ways to engage students. With this information, new course materials are being developed and curriculum changes are being implemented at both the undergraduate and doctoral levels. The next steps are to further explore the impact of these changes. The following paper provides insight into how this program and others can benefit from curriculum mapping.

How can we document if EL is integrated into our programs and courses as intended? One way to ascertain course outcomes is through the formal process of curriculum mapping. Patricia Dyjur, Rachel Braun, Kevin Saito, and Erin Kaipanen present a detailed case study of how a general arts and science degree was mapped for EL activities. Starting with a clear definition of EL (a good overview is included), curriculum mapping is described as"…the process of associating course outcomes with program-level learning outcomes and aligning elements of courses within a program, to identify trends and patterns in aggregate data." They recommend curriculum mapping as a method to capture EL activities and provide details how this can be completed. Also, the tables and figure illustrate the mapping process and quickly identify EL activities and also indicates gaps in the curriculum that can then be addressed.

In this 4th volume of PPLT, the complexity and diversity of experiential learning is explored and the authors expand on the diversity of definitions, perspectives, and applications of EL in higher education. These papers offer insights, experiences, and research findings to inform and inspire our higher education colleagues in the practice and scholarship of teaching and experiential learning.

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