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## Understanding the Role of Ex

### Learning Experience

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## MICE Development in HK

- expansion of MICE venue space
- consecutive increase of attendees
  - convention and exhibition arrivals in 2006 reached 779,324, (a 219% increase over 1997 (HKTB, 2005, 2007))
  - The intended per capita spending of the convention and exhibition visitors reached \$10,349 (US\$1,327), more than twice the HK\$4,478 spending of the average leisure visitor (HKTB, 2005)
- ranked 12 (# of meetings) in 2007 (ICCA, 2008)
- the exhibition industry had expenditure effects of HK\$26.4 (US3.4) billion in 2006 which also led to fiscal impact of \$970 million while creating 58,500 fulltime equivalent employments (HKECIA, 2007)
- Apparently, great government supports in promoting Hong Kong as a preferable conference destination and satisfying its customers is necessary (Qu, Li, & Chau, 2000)

## Govt's Commitment to Develop MICE

- **Office of the Chief Executive, 2007: the Financial Secretary & the Secretary for Commerce and Economic Development would lead a cross-sector steering committee to review and formulate development strategies for the MICE sector**
  - Government
  - convention and exhibition
  - Travel and hotel trades
  - tertiary and training institutions
- **Financial Secretary Office, 2008: earmarked HK\$150 (US\$19.2) million in MICE promotion in the coming 5 years to attract more high quality and mega convention and exhibition projects**
- **The steering committee supported the HKTB's workplan**
  - to launch a "Meetings & Exhibitions Hong Kong" (MEHK) office in November 2008 to offer one-stop professional support to MICE organizers choosing HK as a destination for meetings and exhibitions
  - to incorporate MICE in secondary and tertiary education to enhance efforts in nurturing and retaining MICE talent and ensure that education and training programs can meet market needs

## HR Challenges

- **one of the major challenges the MICE sector faces in human resources development is the provision of training courses at various levels to meet the evolving needs to support long-term development (Legislative Council, 2008)**
- **To meet this increasing demand from the tourism and hospitality industry to train professionals, the School of Hotel and Tourism Management (SHTM) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) also proposed a new curriculum in a proactive position to the pressing needs from the MICE sector**

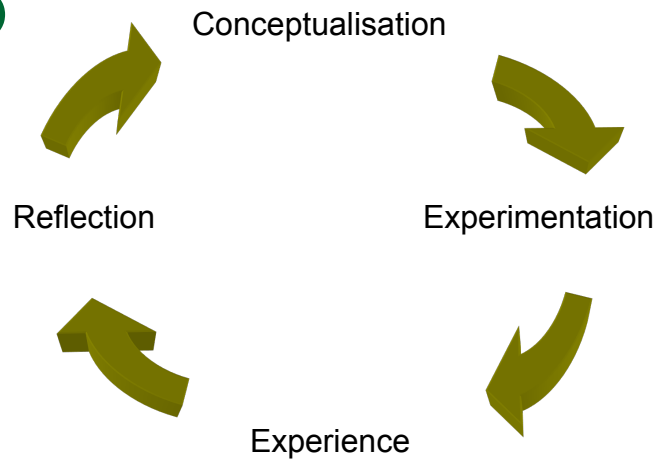
## New Program in SHTM

- A distinct feature is that it has responded to industry needs from inception with industry involvement to ensure the curriculum mirror the realities of the changing business climate to meet the needs of the industry
- The newly developed subjects would cover the broad areas of meeting planning, exhibition management, venue management, and convention sales and service.
- 2 of the new subjects had already been incorporated into SHTM's BSc (Honors) programs in Hotel Management and Tourism Management
  - Special Event Projects I and II practising their skills in real life settings
  - organizing the International Convention and Expo Summit 2009 (ICES2009), held in May 2009 in Hong Kong

## Designing the Curriculum

- inherent problems is to introduce a practical and experiential element (Digance, Davidson, & Gleeson, 2001). The emphasis is the hands-on practice.
- Kolb's cycle was suggested as a way to encourage the development reflective practice through balance learning strategies.
- MICE subject area, by its nature, lends itself to a combination of formal and structure learning with hands-on experience (Lawrence & McCabe, 2001).
- relatively little research has been completed in structuring MICE curriculum in responding to incorporating practical and experiential element.

## Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)



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## Conceptualisation

- Learning in class
- Self-study
- Peer discussion

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## Experimentation – transforming theory for use in real world

- Action plans
- Learning contracts
- Designing experiments
- Devising criteria for evaluation

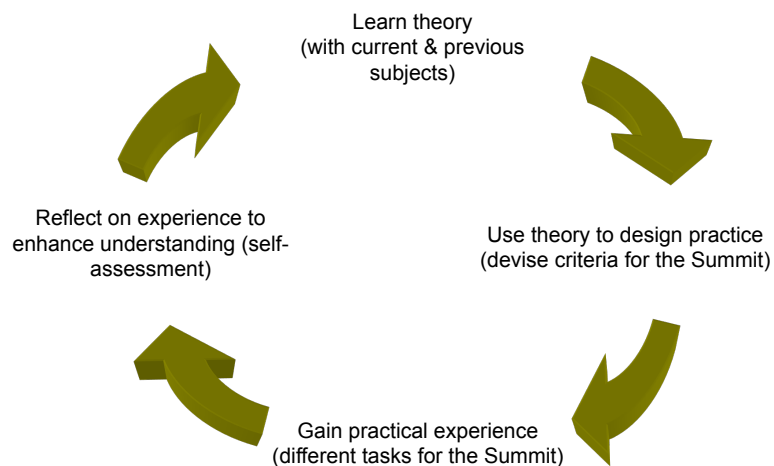
## Experience

- Real life experience
  - Practical work for the Summit
- Substitute experience
  - Role play
  - Simulations
  - Games
- Increasing awareness of experience
  - Log
  - Exercise
  - Demonstration

## Reflection

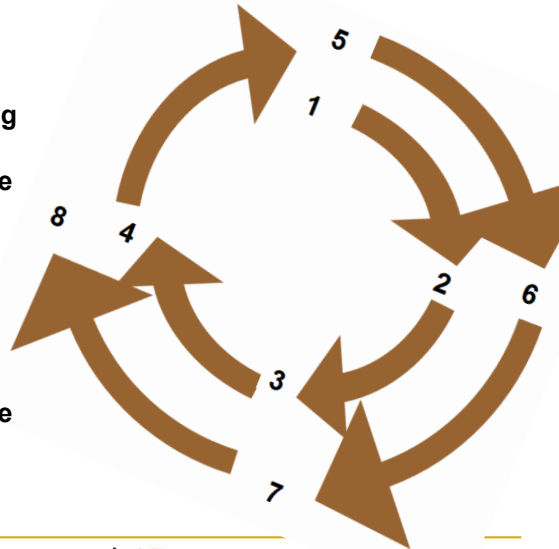
- Reflective journals
- Reviewing video & audio recordings of practices
- Peer appraisal
- Self-assessment
- De-briefing
- Reflection checklist and questionnaires

## A 4-stage Learning Cycle



## Your learning process

1. Learn theory
2. Use theory to set learning goals & plans
3. Gain practical experience
4. Reflect on practice to enhance understanding
5. Understand theory at a higher level
6. Redefine learning goals and plans
7. Gain practical experience with improved concepts
8. Reflect on practice



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## Reflection of Practitioner



Practice with enhanced understanding

Reflection on practice

Practice makes perfect

Gain knowledge

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## Objectives

- to evaluate the learning experience of Hong Kong Chinese students of the practical and experiential elements of the MICE curriculum
- to evaluate the effectiveness in achieving the learning outcomes through experiential learning
- to develop and present a case study that embodies themes relating to MICE and experiential learning

## Methodology

**A case study of students participating in a real life project -- ICES2009**

- A reflection checklist and questionnaires was used to collect data on 37 students' learning experience and learning outcomes.
- 48 interviews with key informants of the project stakeholders
  - Informants were selected because their knowledge about and willingness to provide information for the issues of the research (Kumar, Stern, & Anderson, 1993).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Interviews (n=48)</b>
Client (Summit Chairs)	2
Industry (Sponsor Representatives)	7
Delegate	3
Instructor and Programme Chair	2
Student Organising Committee	28
Speaker	4
Volunteer	2

## Evaluation of ICES 2009 (n=37)

<b>Components of ICES 2009</b>	<b>Mean*</b>
Program content	4.24
Satisfaction of speakers and paper presenters	4.24
Satisfaction of delegates	4.16
Sponsorship amount	4.14
Program structure	4.05
Social arrangements	3.92
Registration	3.92
Production of all related materials	3.89
Publicity	3.86
Logistics arrangements	3.78
Financial management	3.5

\*based on 5-likert scale; 5: excellent; 1: very poor

## Evaluation of the Experiential Learning Outcomes (n=37)

Attributes	Mean*
Obtained a valuable learning experience	4.35
Learnt how to work well as a team	4.30
Obtained knowledge on special event management	4.16
Been satisfied with this learning experience	4.16
Improved my communication skills	4.00
Objectively appraised the work of others	3.97
Applied concept/knowledge learnt to real-life situations	3.95
Justified solutions made to problems	3.92
Involved myself completely in this learning process	3.89
Increased competence in special event operation	3.86
Developed better interpersonal skills	3.81
Made effective judgment during planning	3.78
Critically analyzed the feasibility of the project	3.75
Managed effectively all the available resources to achieve set objectives	3.70

\*based on 5-likert scale; 5: a lot; 1: minimal

Attributes	Mean*
Developed transferable skills to sectors other than event management	3.70
Developed skills that are necessary for effective communication in the MICE industry	3.68
Applied my creative skills	3.65
Objectively analyzed and critiqued the organization of the event	3.65
Become more confident	3.65
Enhanced my management skills	3.64
Obtained useful experience in constructing and reconstructing concepts & knowledge	3.62
Become more sociable	3.59
Changed the attitude towards my whole learning experience	3.57
Openly discussed the strengths and weaknesses of others	3.54
Become more competitive in the future work place	3.46
Changed the attitude towards working in this industry	3.46
Built up useful networks	3.27
Improved my employability upon graduation	3.22
Enhanced my future career path	3.19
Obtained technical skills	3.14

\*based on 5-likert scale; 5: a lot; 1: minimal

## A Need for C&E education in HK

- **Industry representatives:**
  - industry growth leads to increased demand for trained professionals
  - different views on the nature of the training from a formal degree, continuous training, to on-the-job training
    - on-the-job trainings enhance learners in flexibility and responsiveness to meet challenges
    - practical experience in carrying different roles also enhances critical thinking, crisis management, and independent thoughts
    - problem-solving should be emphasized rather than conceptual learning
  - a gap between academic knowledge and industry application exists
    - should not be the reason to deny the role of formal education in the C&E sector as similar gaps prevail in any fields of study
  - theoretical education and industry practices are complimentary to one another
- similar to the core idea of experiential learning
- C&E education is expected to encourage students' critical thinking and analysis, and pose advantages to students when comparing to graduates from a non-related fields.

## Role of C&E Education

- **industry informants: (in line with findings from the 30 student interviews)** C&E education can provide students with background information, intellectual skills, knowledge, and professional terminologies required in the MICE industry
  - Graduates with faster and more effective progression in the industry and enhancement of further learning and knowledge reconstructing
  - hands-on learning helps cultivating students' interest before stepping into the industry
  - especially true for students who did not enroll in the related subjects before organizing ICES
    - more difficult and time-consuming to pick up the knowledge when working
- **Students: challengeable to apply to reality, found some theories could be applied to situations with modification**
  - their interests were built up during their study
  - experiential learning activity gave them a real touch on their interest

## Role of Experiential Learning

- **critical for a C&E education.**
  - **Some informants: the majority of all programs should base on experiential learning because of its role in hands-on experience and advanced experience**
- **students can access to industry personnel, feel the industry and find the interests, re-construct knowledge learnt, and enhance maturity in thinking**
- **useful especially with good supervision which allows students to adapt a trial-and-error approach to learn from the mistakes**
- **As a process, practical experiences strengthen the solid elements to the framework of knowledge learnt.**
- **Students: comparing to other course projects, closer to reality which help testing their knowledge learnt and modify their knowledge to different situations.**
  - **Such process is consistent to Kolb's (Kolb, 1984) learning cycle.**

## Positive Changes

- **Students: positive changes on the perspectives of skills, knowledge and attitude**
  - **Skills – communication, interpersonal, computer, organization and management skills**
  - **Unexpected skill -- leadership, especially for students who took part as the coordinators of the sub-committees**
  - **knowledge used is most often unintentional**
    - **knowledge obtained from MICE-related and other subjects were applied: marketing, accounting, customer relation management, consumer behavior and human resource management.**
- **the knowledge learnt needs to be adjusted to the real cases and be applied flexibly**
  - **Theories learnt from previous subjects provided a framework for the real experience, and in return concepts were reinforced and enhanced with important elements within the framework.**
  - **Through experiencing the concepts and theories, knowledge were modified based on the real situations and better retained. Some hidden knowledge was also rediscovered**

## Attitude Change

- **A higher level of involvement, sense of responsibility and seriousness were experienced with no exception**
- **A more in-depth understanding of the industry**
  - contributed to students' interest in working in the industry in different directions.
- **A sense of bonding was experienced**
  - after knowing the different working styles and personality of the student committee members, cooperation and communication were improved
  - Such relation between bonding and working relation also reflect the real world

## Beneficial to Achieving Learning Outcomes

- **Achievements on skills and knowledge were also found matching with the instructor's pre-set learning outcomes and students' expectations**
- **skills could not be obtained through other method learning alone**
  - soft skills learnt can be transferable to other industries while these
- **Appropriate learning method**
  - encourages students to gain knowledge through self-exploration with stronger retention of such knowledge

## Conclusion

- need for C&E education in HK
- a valuable experience
- encourage students' critical thinking and analysis, and pose advantages to students when comparing to graduates from a non-related fields
- Students' interests were built up with a real touch on their interest
- knowledge learnt needs to be adjusted to the real cases and be applied flexibly
- Experiential learning is also beneficial to students as achievements on skills and knowledge were also found matching with the instructor's pre-set learning outcomes and students' expectations

## Further Research

- serves as the foundation for understanding the innovative education approach in hospitality and tourism
- provides the foundation for experiential learning on MICE in HK
- serves as a lead to design other data collection efforts by providing guidance on the target audience and the types of questions for further research
- Further research with a larger sample size to include more projects enhances the generalization of experiential learning of the Asian practice
- Other approaches, questionnaires, can be combined with the qualitative approach adapted in this paper to examine training needs and methods from a holistic perspective