**Title**

Teaching the Cyneﬁn Domains of Knowledge as practice

**Abstract**

This interactive session leads participants through a reﬂective analysis of the Cyneﬁn Domains of Knowledge (see https://hbr.org/2007/11/a-leaders-framework-for-decision-making) to explore how diﬀerent situations require diﬀerent ways of applying knowledge. Four knowledge domains (simple, complicated, complex, chaos) are deﬁned by relationships between cause and eﬀect, while the ﬁfth (disorder) indicates uncertainty about which context applies. Snowden and Boone explained how to use the domains for decision-making in 2007. During the session participants will both encounter and explore the signiﬁcance of this model in both management education and practice.

**Conference Theme:** This experiential presentation is proposed as part of the conference track “Reflective Reinvention: Harnessing our Heritage to Reshape Management”. Management theory draws on a range of disciplines for assistance in helping intending managers comprehend their future workplaces. Knowledge Management - from which this session draws its theoretical focus - is a comparatively recent addition to disciplinary study. As such it has potential to contribute to ongoing efforts to reshape management and practices of management education. This immersive experience will introduce participants to - and/or extend their understanding of - Knowledge Management models that have particular relevance for managers, including the Cynefin Domains of Knowledge, and the SECI Model of Knowledge Creation.

**Unique Contribution:** The session has not been presented before or elsewhere. It's unique contribution is the manner in which it enacts theory into practice in a manner that enables participants to explore their own use of the theory while also appreciating how to enact theory into practice.

**Introduction**

As a comparatively recent addition to academic studies Knowledge Management (KM) often contributes from a cross-disciplinary perspective. Some KM models provide particularly relevant tools for engaging with management theories. The Cynefin Domains of Knowledge (2007) provide a framework for understanding how knowledge operates differently in different contexts. The SECI Model of Knowledge Creation builds on Polyani’s concepts of tacit and explicit knowledge and proposes that ‘knowledge is continuously converted and created as users practice, collaborate, interact, and

learn.’ (Frost 2017). Together they provide a framework for helping students understand how to interact with the theories they will be encountering in management education programs.

**Theoretical Foundation/Teaching Implications**

This work emerged from experiences of using the Classroom as Organisation (CAO) approach in an undergraduate program, taught in English in Finland. In preparing to introduce this approach it was evident that students would benefit from some introductory exploration of experientially based learning strategies. The first enactment used a World Cafe format to open proceedings and this was extended for the second enactment to include a series of original experiential activities based on the Cynefin Domains. CAO intends to engage its participants in an ‘as if real’ organisation where knowledge and learning are key products (Herbert & Leigh 2018). As a teaching format it has been the subject of much research and reporting in MOBTS journals and conferences. Although not a direct part of this work, the requirements and constraints of the CAO approach were a direct prompt for it.

Cynefin Domains of Knowledge outline a way of thinking about thinking - and about making use of knowledge in ways unique to particular contextual requriements. In the context of CAO it provides a way to help participants transition from known and familiar roles and responsibilities as ‘students’ to unknown and unfamiliar conditions as ‘co-creators’ of learning and new knowledge. The SECI Model of Knowledge Creation proposes a cycle of knowledge acquisition beginning with Socialisation: tacit understanding acquired through practice and imitation (for example): moving to Externalisation: acquisition of explicit knowledge through formal means and thence to Combination and Internalisation.

Arriving in a CAO, participants find themselves in an unfamiliar context where expectations about such things as ‘how to behave as a student’ will no longer seem effective. They find they are required to act - even, it seems - before they know what to take action on. Such conditions are at best unsettling, and at worst may even feel threatening, not because they are unusual in a general sense but because they are unexpected in an educational setting. The implications of this are far-reaching and unsettling enough to deter many educators from making use of more complex experientially-based learning strategies. The problem seems to lie, in part, in the adequacy of general knowledge about how to use knowledge intelligently and developmentally in educational settings.

Such a problem cannot be addressed directly through application of management theories since it relates to the process of teaching, not to the content of what is being taught. Recognising this led to the initial decision to use KM theories in action prior to introducing students to the CAO environment. Dick and Dalmau (2000) have pointed out the importance of understanding the concept of ‘a theory of action’ and its component parts our ‘espoused theories’ and our ‘theories in action’. I had become aware, over time, that leading students in an enactment of management theories requires me to be as honest as possible in my own dealings with them as an educator. This requires, in turn, that I assess, and regularly reassess my own teaching methods in an effort to keep them in alignment with the content of what I am introducing. Management theory itself does not provide much direct help, although Argyris and Schon (1978) certainly offer some guidelines that are relevant to this current work. This session will provide introductory tools for guiding educators through consideration of how to build alignment between the management theories they are teaching and the methods by which they do so. The aim is to help student gain access to unexpected learning in conditions that are uncomfortable but bearable, and to assist educators create such conditions without experiencing debilitating anxiety about managing their own roles and responsibilities.

**Learning Objectives**

Participants will experience a mini-cycle of the Cynefin Domains of Knowledge and consider how they might make use of them in various contexts Participants will explore how Knowledge Management theories can help inform their teaching practices. Participants will have the opportunity to consider issues of cross-disciplinary learning processes and examine how to make greater use of knowledges and information from disciplines outside their own domains of familiar knowledge.

**Session Description**

Resource Needs There are no additional resource requirements beyond beyond the typically available classroom resources (i.e. PC computer/projector, whiteboard/markers) Unique Contribution This will be first time that this sequence of activities has been presented to an academic audience, after several iterations wiht student groups. It is a unique design for learning with potential to prompt participants to explore new options for their own teaching programs.

**MOBTS Experience**

This is the my first time submitting to MOBTS

**Resources**

Argyris, C. & Schön, D. 1978, Organizational learning: a theory of action perspective, McGraw-Hill, New York:. Dick, B. & Dalmau, T. 2000, 'Argyris and Schön: some elements of their models', Resource Papers in Aciton Reserach, weblog, Brisbane. Qld, <http://www.aral.com.au/resources/argyris2.html>. Frost, A. 2017, 'The SECI Model and Knowledge Conversion', Knowledge Managmeent Tools, weblog, Copenhagen, <http://www.knowledge-management-tools.net/knowledge-conversion.html>. Herbert, A. & Leigh, E. 2018, 'Classroom as Organisation: An Educational Strategy for Emergent Learning', in A. Eskola (ed.), Navigating throuigh Changing Times: Knowledge Work in Complex Environments, Routledge, New York. Snowden, D.J. & Boone, M.E. 2007, 'A Leader’s Framework for Decision Making', Harvard Business Review. November 2007: 69-76.