The Past, Present & Future of Executive Education

Toby Thompson
Track 3 – ‘Education and Learning Approaches to the Future’

Session 2
The Past, Present and Future of Executive Education
Philosophical Reflections in a Networked Learning World
Toby Thompson

Have you ever stopped to wonder what you’re doing educating executives? Can we think beyond a purely technology-based future for executive education? Where do you think executive education has come from, and where is it going? This session will do the following:

• Encourage you to stop, and to think philosophically about what you do
• Provide you with an opposing view of what the future of executive education could be, thereby enabling you to reorient where you currently are
• Jeopardise cherished notions of technology-based progress in executive education, to challenge you to think and debate alternatives with your peers in the session
• Celebrate, for however fleeting a moment, the fact that you are the source of inspiration for all those around you looking for change in your organisation
• Assess the extent to which you’re cut-out for philosophy, as an educator within the executive class, and to link you with a philosophy buddy to continue the conversation
How do I know if this is the room I should be in?

Teaching is more difficult than learning, since it requires the teacher ‘to let learn’

Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*, 1951
My Argument

1. Whenever we think of the future, we often invoke technology, in some form.

2. This is a misguided, though powerful, thought and doesn’t get us out of the problem we’re facing: I will argue that it compounds the problem.

3. Our bigger problem is that we’re not THINKING, and that current approaches to tech-based exec-ed aren’t helping.
The Past, Present, and Future of Executive Education

How do I know if this is the room I should be in?

My Argument

Learning Resources

Assumptions

- Some fancy PowerPoint™ slides
- An extended ‘web’ metaphor
- Philosophy
- All of you and your time
The Past, Present, and Future of Executive Education

Assumptions:

- customised executive education
- associated with a b-school
- technology accompanying such programs
Toby as a Zen Buddhist Monk

Cranfield School of Management

PhD Candidate

I spent 6 years as a Zen monk in Northumberland, UK. Influences my thinking.
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Influences my thinking
The Past, Present, and Future of Executive Education - Toby - Cranfield School of Management

Toby as a Zen Buddhist Monk

Cranfield School of Management

PhD Candidate

- 10 years at Cranfield’s Centre for Customised Executive Development
- Networked Learning Director
- Client-facing, involved in design & online delivery of customised exec-ed programmes
The Management of Time:
New Orders for Executive Education

University of London’s
Institute of Education

Martin Heidegger (1889-1976)
Networked Learning uses a range of contemporary technologies to link an organisation's learners to:

- Relevant academic expertise
- Other learners and experts within their organisation
- Customised learning resources

See Wikipedia entry and Cranfield’s CCED website for more information on networked learning.
Is there a contrary form of thinking to Joe Nellis’s compelling macro-economic story?

From what position (e.g. fact-based, personal judgement) could we possibly question Joe’s macro-economic progress?

...And what has this got to do with us?
Areas of Philosophy Relevant to Exec-Ed

- Ethics
- Epistemology
- Ontology

Conclusion

EXERCISE
discussion in pairs

Is there a contrary form of thinking to Joe Nellis’s compelling macro-economic story?

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...And what has this got to do with us?
Areas of Philosophy Relevant to Exec-Ed

- Ethics
- Epistemology
- Ontology

What is Ontology?
Ontology for Executives

Is knowledge everything?
Epistemology for Executives

Who cares about Metaphysics?
Metaphysics for Executives

What is Ontology?
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Is knowledge everything?
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Who cares about Metaphysics?
Metaphysics for Executives

Exec Religion: MONEY
All Hail Capitalism

Ethics for Busy Execs
Be Good. End of.
How to cover the topic of Ethics in a Customised Executive Education programme

Hardcover (tough but not impossible)

Product Description

Overview

• Less about what to do – more about WHY to do it
• Sometimes left to the CSR crew to cover
• Discussions of right and wrong doesn’t always fit well with our broader agenda in exec-ed
• Preaching doesn’t sell
How to cover the topic of Ethics in a Customised Executive Education programme

Hardcover (tough but not impossible)

Review

We don’t seem too fussed about ethics

• Why is it we don’t have too many clients wanting to tackle corporate or managerial ethics?
• Is it because we don’t think it relevant or necessary or profitable?
Exec-Ed professionals who bought into ‘ETHICS’ also bought into the following:

- **Rethinking Leadership**
  Prof. Donna Ladkin
  Cranfield School of Management

- **Corporate Social Responsibility**
  Prof. David Grayson
  Cranfield School of Management

- **Humanism in Business**
  Prof. Heiko Spitzeck
  FDC Fundacao Dom Cabral, Brazil

**Seldom in stock**
This is a bit obscure and doesn’t fit into the normal scheme of Exec-Ed
DIFFICULT TO SELL TO A CLIENT
No gift wrap available

**RRP:** £0.00  
**Price:** £0.00  
You save: never having to worry about it

**I understand these**
**Probably wouldn’t**
Need convincing that this is appropriate for executive education?

**I’ve seen that first one**

How can this be a wish?
Share this – yeah, right
**Areas of Philosophy Relevant to Exec-Ed**

- Ethics
- Epistemology
- Ontology

**Areas of Philosophy Relevant to Executive Education**

1. **Ethics**
   - What is Ontology?
     - Ontology for Executives
2. **Epistemology**
   - Is knowledge everything?
     - Epistemology for Executives
3. **Ontology**
   - Who cares about Metaphysics?
     - Metaphysics for Executives
4. **Politics & Justice**
   - The Logic we all Assume
     - Philosophy the heart of logic...
5. **Religion**
   - It's All In Our Heads Isn't It?
     - Mind is not everything...
6. **Ethics for Busy Execs**
   - Exec Religion: MONEY
     - All Hail Capitalism
7. **Conclusion**

**EXERCISE**

discuss in pairs

The Past, Present, and Future of Executive Education - PHILOSOPHY - Areas of Philosophy Relevant to Executive Education
How do you cover the topic of KNOWLEDGE in an Executive Education programme?

Hardcover

Product Description

Review

• We talk a lot about KNOWLEDGE
• Often about ‘knowledge transfer’ where knowledge is a commodity that can be moved around
• Knowledge is usually the content of our programmes
• ‘What knowledge is’ is hardly ever tackled
• Knowledge and thinking are not the same

RRP: £0.00
Price: £0.00
You save: never having to worry about it

Seldom in stock
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DIFFICULT TO SELL TO CLIENT
No gift wrap available

I think I buy this...
You mean buying K itself?
Need convincing that this is appropriate for executive education?
Why would I bother?

How can this be a wish?
Share this – yeah, right
How do you cover the topic of KNOWLEDGE in an Executive Education programme?

Hardcover (tough)

Review

- Knowledge is part of every programme we run
- When we evaluate a programme, KNOWLEDGE is often one of the indices we use
- Concentrating on what knowledge IS, as an abstract concept, seems indulgent
- Yet we shouldn’t confuse knowledge with thinking

Need convincing that this is appropriate for executive education?

How can this be a wish?

Share this – yeah, right
Exec-Ed professionals who *bought into* ‘KNOWLEDGE’ also bought into the following:

**Rethinking Leadership**  
Prof. Donna Ladkin  
Cranfield School of Management

**Knowledge Management**  
Selection of KM articles in HBR  
Professors from Harvard Business School

**Knowledge Leadership**  
Dr. C. Lakshman  
Independent consultant, Pune, India

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**Seldom in Stock**  
This is a bit obscure and doesn’t fit into the normal scheme of Exec-Ed  
DIFFICULT TO SELL TO CLIENT  
No gift wrap available

**I understand these**

**I might buy them**

Need convincing that this is appropriate for executive education?

**Not sure what I’m buying**

How can this be a wish?

**Share this – yeah, right**
Track 3: EDUCATION & LEARNING APPROACHES TO THE FUTURE

Area of interest: philosophy of executive education

Areas of Philosophy Relevant to Exec-Education
- Ethics
- Epistemology
- Ontology

Conclusion

EXERCISE: discussion in pairs

The Past, Present, and Future of Executive Education - PHILOSOPHY - Areas of Philosophy Relevant to Executive Education

- Ontology
- Epistemology
- Metaphysics
- Religion

Ontology for Executives

What is Ontology?

Epistemology for Executives

Is knowledge everything?

Metaphysics for Executives

Who cares about Metaphysics?

Ethics for Busy Execs

Politics & Justice

Justice: not just office politics

Philosophy the heart of logic...

Mind is not everything...

Be Good. End of.

Exec Religion: MONEY

All Hail Capitalism

Physical Education

It's All In Our Heads Isn't It?

Mind-body dualism
How do you cover the topic of ONTOLOGY in an Executive Education programme?

Hardcover

Product Description

Review

• ‘The branch of METAPHYSICS dealing with the nature of BEING’ Oxford English Dictionary
• This is about what something is
• What is a business school?
• What is executive education?

Never in stock
This is a highly obscure and never fits into the normal scheme of Exec-Ed IMPOSSIBLE TO SELL TO CLIENT
No gift wrap available

RRP: £0.00
Price: £0.00
You save: never EVER having to worry about it

What the heck?

People buy this!?
Need convincing that this is appropriate for executive education?

Make it stop

How can this be a wish?
Share this – yeah, right
How do you cover the topic of ONTOLOGY in an Executive Education programme?

Very Hardcover (phew!)

Review

No reviews received

Never in stock
This is a highly obscure and never fits into the normal scheme of Exec-Ed
IMPOSSIBLE TO SELL TO CLIENT
No gift wrap available
Exec-Ed professionals who *bought into* ‘ONTOLOGY’ also bought into the following:

Clinical Oncology
Dr Antony J Neal, Peter Hoskins
St Luke’s Cancer Centre & University College London

The Gruffalo
Julia Donaldson, Axel Scheffler
Macmillan

**Never in stock**
This is a highly obscure and never fits into the normal scheme of Exec-Ed
IMPOSSIBLE TO SELL TO CLIENT
No gift wrap available

- **I understand these**
- **Probably wouldn’t**

Need convincing that this is appropriate for executive education?
That **iTunes U looks good**

How can this be a wish?
Share this – yeah, right
Click the image to the left to register for this iTunes U course.
A moment of philosophical reflection!

What has just happened?

• Consumerist tendency to acquire something
• Dealing in fiction and performance
• Isn’t this symptomatic of our not thinking?
EXERCISE – discuss in pairs either an:

• Ontological issue
• Epistemological issue
• Ethical issue

that you think is relevant to executive education
The Past, Present, and Future of Executive Education

- **PHILOSOPHY**
- **PAST**
- **PRESENT**
- **FUTURE**

- **What is executive education?**
- **What is a business school?**

- **Knowledge (EPISTEMOLOGY)**
  - How

- **What on earth is the relevance to exec-ed?**

- **Some text about that hyperlink goes here**
- **Some more text about that hyperlink goes here**
- **Some text about that hyperlink goes here**
**Historia Magistra Vitae** (Cicero 55 BCE)

“history is life’s teacher”

But not, it seems, for executives and exec-ed. Exemplary practice only extends as far back as an out-of-date case study.
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The Present as waiting room for the future

Are we facing our own ‘lost decade’ (Joe Nellis)? Are we in our own doldrums

Are we arrogant (Dave Coplin) about the present?

Or do we only have the present?
The future of thinking in executive education
Types of Time According to Heidegger

- Clock Time
- World Time
- Primordial Time

Clock Time – World Time – Primordial Time

clock time: how we measure the time we have
Clock Time – **World Time** – Primordial Time

**world time:** how time flies when we’re engrossed in something
Types of Time According to Heidegger

- Clock Time
- World Time
- Primordial Time

**Primordial time**: the basis of clock time and world time