Research Article

Look at Our Journey: Prompting the Marginalism of Superior Utility with a Higher Subjective Value to Motivate Management Student Meta-Learning Processes

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Abstract

Improving perceptions of graduate utility is fundamental to Higher Education's employability and skills agenda. However, utility enhancement is a ubiquitous consequence of all learning. Therefore, motivating students to engage in deep learning to improve their utility is problematic. Using the student voice, in this article, I explain how prompts endorsing marginalism as a benefit of attaining superior utility with higher subjective value informed and motivated meta-learning approaches. Drawing on data from an ethnography and interpretive phenomenology situated in the unique learning environment of the COVID-19 pandemic, findings reveal students were motivated to seek utility attainment opportunities that marginally enhanced self-perceptions, transferability of learning, and employability. This article is among the first to explain why the attainment of knowledge and can-do competencies associated with marginalism, superior utility, and higher subjective value, motivates learners' present and future time perspectives.

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In a saturated jobs market, Higher Education (HE) delivers diminishing returns for graduates perceived as abundant commodities with comparable utility propositions (Coffee & Lavallee, 2014; Herbert et al., 2020; Jackson, 2014). To avoid becoming a commodity, graduates must attain marginally superior utility that differentiates their knowledge and competencies from their peers. Marginalism theory advocates that the difference between any utility is its perceived value, subjectively evaluated by its scarcity, superiority, and capacity to satisfy a given need (Menger, 1871/1976). Previous studies exploring employer (Kashef, 2015), professor (Ryan, 2016), and student (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020; Sealy, 2018) perceptions of graduate utility reveal uncertainty about how knowledge and competencies can be differentiated. There are concerns regarding whether graduates with scarce can-do competencies attained through experiential learning are marginally superior to others who have only been taught established theories (D. A. Kolb, 2015). These differences are marginal but important. Nevertheless, the learning environment is only relevant if students are motivated to adopt meta-learning strategies that cultivate superior knowledge and competencies (Biggs, 1985, 1987). Given its significance, it is uncertain whether students are aware of the importance of attaining marginally superior utility (Filipić, 2010).

Students rely on studying context-specific management programs (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020), associations with the university attended (Jackson, 2014), or the grades achieved (Filipić, 2010; Sealy, 2018), to inform perceptions of their competencies and expected utility. Indeed, Simons et al. (2000, p. 336) claim that performance-oriented students demonstrate competencies by achieving higher grades than their peers in "*easy and less challenging tasks that guarantee* success." Thus, attaining the superior utility of can-do competencies associated with deep learning for the sake of learning is immaterial to many students (Chin & Brown, 2000; Filipić, 2010; Sealy, 2018). This reliance on objective associations and imprecise measures of knowledge reveals the perception gap between how employers, professors, and students evaluate utility (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020; Kashef, 2015; Ryan, 2016). It also leads to claims that students are unmotivated and resistant to any form of learning and assessment that is challenging and unrelated to grades (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Serrano et al., 2018).

Despite its importance to HE's employability and skills agenda, scholarly inquiries into the relationship between marginalism, superior utility, motivations

to learn, and subjective value are scarce (Filipić, 2010). Educational psychologists explain that the instrumentality of perceived utility of what is learned motivates student learning from a present and future time perspective (Kauffman & Husman, 2004; Simons et al., 2000). Combining goal theory, performance-orientation, and future time perspectives to reconsider the motivational influence of instrumentality, Simons et al. (2000) reveal that the personal desire for either intrinsic or extrinsic reward has a negligible effect on academic performance. Long-term extrinsic reward is a feature of student motivation, with most seeking to transfer the utility of what was learned to impress others with good grades (Simons et al., 2000). But when students are aware of future benefits, they also begin to seek the intrinsic rewards of learning (Kauffman & Husman, 2004; Simons et al., 2000). As extrinsic and intrinsic rewards have negligible influence, Simons et al. (2000) suggest that future research should manipulate the instrumentality of perceived utility to explain how it influences motivations to learn. One of the barriers to exploring the manipulation of instrumentality is the extrinsic reward of a grade. Indeed, limited by the lack of substitution effect for grades, social economist Filipić (2010) manipulated perceptions of a pre-assigned examination task by prompting awareness of enhancing utility by achieving higher grades in an examination setting.

Despite Simons et al. (2000) attention to the utility of what is learned in the classroom and Filipić's (2010) focus on examination grades, they reached the comparable conclusion that utility-oriented prompts motivate students to learn. Thus, prompts appear to induce what Biggs (1985) describes as a self-awareness of the student's motives for learning. Yet, whether prompts only motivate engagement in the classroom or examination setting remains uncertain. As Biggs (1985, 1987) and Chin and Brown (2000) question, what if the prompts informed metacognitive self-awareness motives central to deep meta-learning approaches? Then, what if that awareness encouraged the attainment of marginally superior utility for students with diverse personal motivational goals in an experiential learning environment? Furthermore, what if prompting the attainment of marginally superior utility instead of grades as a measure of success had a role in the complex present and future time perspective motivations for learning?

The originality of this article is its use of Menger's (1871/1976) humanist economic theories of marginalism, utility, and subjective value to explain how and why they prompt achievement motivations related to deep learning for the sake of learning. Focusing on motivations to learn, my primary aim is to develop Menger's (1871/1976) utility theory for use as a prompt in the contemporary educational setting. Thus, in this article, I propose and demonstrate that prompting awareness of marginalism before engaging in learning informs meta-learning strategies associated with attaining superior utility.

Utilizing culturally diverse student voices, in this ethnography and interpretive phenomenology of final-year BSc Sport Management students in England and Hong Kong (HK), I examine motivations to learn before and during the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The article is not COVID-19 specific; nevertheless, I acknowledge the unique experiential learning opportunities instigated by the chaos of unforeseen circumstances (D. A. Kolb, 2015). Hence, the no-detriment regulations adopted by the English HE sector in response to the chaos of the COVID-19 pandemic provided a fortuitous opportunity. In the English HE system, students require 360-credits (equivalent to 90 American system credits) to graduate. These credits are attained by studying a degree program of 120-credits per annum for 3 years. However, the no-detriment regulations enabled students to graduate with 80 final-year credits instead of 120, with no detriment to their degree classification. In practice this permitted students to abandon two 20-credit modules; for instance, the Sport Event Management (SEM) module discussed in this article. Thus, situated in circumstances Boud (2007) envisaged as optimal, the no-detriment regulations removed the lack of the substitution effect, enabling the attainment of utility as a motivator to be explored in a context where being assessed for a grade was optional.

To provide a framework for the article, I begin by summarizing Menger's (1871/1976) theories, explaining their suitability and limitations when applied to contemporary HE, and conceiving how they can act as motivational prompts. I then present and discuss a justification for experiential learning and authentic assessment for learning. Finally, I address three questions using Menger's (1871/1976) theories of marginalism, utility, and subjective value, combined with Biggs' (1985, 1987) meta-learning framework as explanatory devices: (1) Did learning for the sake of learning motivate students to engage? (2) Did the students perceive that the marginal utility attained rewarded their choice to engage? (3) What lessons can HE professors learn from using the attainment of marginally superior utility to prompt student motivation?

Learning to be Marginally Superior

Menger's (1871/1976) humanist economic theories conceptualized the marginalism of utility and its subjective value contrarily to the quantitative models used by his contemporaries. Rather than describing what something is and what value it has in utilitarian terms, Menger (1871/1976) explained that consumers assign a subjective value to the utility of a product or service based on its capacity to satisfy their needs in a given context. Employing the concept of marginalism, Menger (1871/1976) argued that subjective value is not only

dependent on the amount of need satisfaction a consumer receives from utilizing a good or service, but also its perceived scarcity. Thus, Menger (1871/1976) solved the water/diamond paradox by demonstrating that a diamond has a higher value in most contexts. Put simply, the subjective value of a utility is informed by a perceived marginalism between the availability of superior versus inferior goods or services in relation to a given need.

Menger (1871/1976) made limited reference to HE in his theses, which were attentive to processes related to measures of value rather than motives or outcomes. Consequently, his theories are seldom used in pedagogic studies to explain how awareness of the marginalism of utility can motivate meta-learning processes. Nonetheless, Menger (1871/1976) placed a high subjective value on graduates, explaining that people "*are being trained in our universities to meet the needs of society for similar services in the future*" (p. 79). He depicted universities as service providers who perform a social good by transforming people from commodities into useful utilities. But Menger's (1871/1976, p. 79) humanistic approach rejected his contemporaries' connection between utility and utilitarianism. Consistent with the product marketing philosophy of his time, Menger (1871/1976) endorsed making the best degree of knowledge available for employers to choose from. Thus, Menger (1871/1976) acknowledged that associations with the university attended (Jackson, 2014), grade achieved (Filipić, 2010; Sealy, 2018), and the utility of what was learned (Simons et al., 2000), informed perceptions of graduate utility. Indeed, he contended that the scarcity of opportunities to attain university-level knowledge provided the privileged few with superior utility. However, he emphasized the importance of superior degrees of knowledge and can-do competency attainment to meet future needs. Menger (1871/1976) explained that each person decides what degree of knowledge they are capable of attaining, when and where it will be used as a utility, and then decides how much exchange value it has. Furthermore, degrees of knowledge and perceived value can be enhanced through experience in practice, which provides students with can-do competencies (Menger, 1871/1976). Thus, Menger (1871/1976) would argue that students and graduates have distinct marginally superior utility with higher subjective value because they know and can do things that non-graduates cannot.

Despite their congruence with the aims of twenty-first century HE, many of Menger's (1871/1976) conclusions are oblivious to the challenges students now face. The expansion of HE, the emergence of specialist industry-focused programs, and ideological debates on the economic and non-economic value of graduate competencies have made motivating students more challenging. The advantage afforded by the attainment of scarce graduate-level knowledge in Menger's era can no longer guarantee employment or career choices.

There is increased competition for employment among graduates (Herbert et al., 2020); therefore, the product philosophy no longer affords marginalism. Nonetheless, investing in HE study is a cost-benefit risk that can offer significant economic and non-economic rewards for those who have the foresight to attain and demonstrate can-do competencies perceived to have superior utility and higher subjective value before seeking employment (Costello et al., 2002; Menger, 1871/1976).

Menger's (1871/1976) notion that people require their needs to be satisfied at the point of consumption is also problematic given industry's inherent indifference to the utility expected of twenty-first century graduates (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020; Kashef, 2015; Ryan, 2016). Therefore, the contemporary student must not only attain superior can-do competencies, but they must also provide proof that their utility can satisfy immediate and future needs (Fahrner & Schüttoff, 2020). Consequently, Menger's (1871/1976) belief that foresight of which competencies may be required, and how they will be subjectively valued, reveals a paradox in how students can be motivated, taught, and assessed. The challenge for professors and students, as Menger (1871/1976) advises, is that from an objective perspective it is difficult to predict how many people will be required to possess emerging knowledge and can-do competencies, and how society will decide if the knowledge is scarce or marginally superior to what already exists. This uncertainty regarding what they need to know and can do, and whether it is required can de-motivate students leading to indecision or a focus on grades rather than learning. However, prompting foresight of what utilities have higher subjective values now and, in the future, also presents an opportunity to attain a competitive advantage.

In an era where there is a perceived oversupply of competing graduates, they are becoming undifferentiable commodities once more (Herbert et al., 2020; Jackson, 2014). Consequently, with some adaptations, Menger's (1871/1976) theories of marginalism, utility, and subjective value have more importance for prompting student learning than he foresaw. As Coffee and Lavallee (2014) explain, students who can demonstrate attainment of unique knowledge and can-do competencies and have the aptitude to quickly adapt to a new situation are scarce and sought after by employers. Thus, being made aware of the potential advantages of the marginalism of utility and its subjective value, and having opportunities to act on that knowledge, can motivate students.

Experiential Learning and Authentic Assessment

To address concerns regarding substantiating can-do competencies in the competition for employment, many professors blend vocationally relevant

experiential learning with authentic assessments for learning in their management program designs (Kashef, 2015; Sealy, 2018). Indeed, it is now commonplace for management competencies to be enhanced through networking, volunteering, and experiential learning in work-based placements (Iwu et al., 2021; Ryan, 2016; Sealy, 2018). These developments are consistent with D. A. Kolb's (2015) contention that learning is a holistic adaptive process that can happen at any time, between anyone, and in any situation. D. A. Kolb (2015) contextualized learning as a continuous cycle where concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation require the learner to adopt the dialectically oppositional forms of actor and observer. In experiential learning environments, conscious and subjective experience, perception, cognition, and behavior are employed to test abstract theories, reflect on the findings, and provide foresight that leads to action (D. A. Kolb, 2015). Thus, learning is achieved by re-learning previous knowledge and competencies and refining them through experience (A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009).

However, the nature of the learning environment is irrelevant if the student is not motivated to learn. Biggs's (1985, 1987, p. 11) meta-learning framework explains that at the "*presage*" stage, the professor creates a meta-teaching environment to meet the students' needs and abilities. At the same stage, the student contemplates their meta-learning through their understanding of a task, cognitive abilities, level of control, and motives for learning, before deciding whether to adopt a deep, achieving, or surface learning approach in the "*process*" stage (Biggs, 1987, p. 11). The choice of approach will govern the learning outcome, ranging from meeting the minimum assessment requirements as a surface learner to developing superior knowledge and can-do competencies as a deep learner (Biggs, 1987). According to Biggs (1987), it is the professors' fundamental duty to prompt students to engage in the learning process that provides a superior outcome.

It is in this meta-teaching and meta-learning context that the SEM module exists. SEM is a 20-credit core module in the final year of a Sport Management program. It is a resource-intensive vocationally relevant experiential module, which is entrepreneurial and includes a live project. The module follows a semester-long industry placement, where the students have attained practical skills and experienced professional practice. Therefore, the module design encourages the students to persist with the six processes of entrepreneurial learning, by "*actively seeking learning opportunities, learning selectively and purposely, learning in-depth, learning continuously, reflecting on the experience, and transferring competencies into practice*" (Wing Yan Man, 2006, p. 309). Now they are required to conceptualize an event, self-select a group of six peers, and undertake a management planning responsibility, such as

project, finance, or marketing manager. The module is completed in the same academic year as a 40-credit dissertation thesis and three other 20-credit modules (Media Management, Sport Facility & Operational Management, and Modern Brand Management or Professional Development through Sport).

The teaching strategy is scaffolded to provide an opportunity to learn and re-learn theoretical knowledge and scarce can-do competencies in the range of specialist management disciplines which have been subsumed into recent dynamic holistic learning approaches (A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Scaffolding begins by identifying what Vygotsky (1978, p. 84) defined as the "*zone of proximal development*" (ZPD), which is the gap between what each student can achieve with their current competencies and what they can accomplish with skilled support. Scaffolding works by breaking complex processes into smaller pieces; the aim is to provide a supportive pedagogic structure that motivates learning and reduces frustration (McLoughlin & Luca, 2002).

Learning in the scaffolded structure begins with professor-led interactive instruction, where practitioner knowledge, theory into practice models, alumni guest speakers, and illustrative examples from past events provide expert insight into SEM processes. Scaffolding then progresses to a collaborative co-production of knowledge, before the students are given control to engage in independent learning (McLoughlin & Luca, 2002). It is in the final stage of scaffolding that the students' knowledge and can-do competencies develop, as they take responsibility for their learning by methodically relating the smaller processes to the interrelated complexity of implementing a live project. Consequently, scaffolding enables and motivates learning for the sake of learning related to the supplementary knowledge required for the successful implementation of the live project in the world of practice (Boud, 2007; Kvale, 2007). Indeed, exposure to past event illustrative examples motivates many of the SEM students to independently learn new skills such as graphic design, digital and social media marketing, and video editing to enhance their event and to develop their utility. The scaffolded experiential nature of the module facilitates a transferability of learning (Boud, 2007), which enables the students to develop an evidence-base to communicate their utility to potential employers. Thus, progression through scaffolded learning provides the students with a sense of accomplishment and personal dispositions that will help them to transition into future learning and employment.

To provide the dual product of theoretical knowledge and can-do competencies advocated by Menger's (1871/1976) conceptualization of education, SEM employs a critical pedagogy approach. Postulated by Freire (1970), critical pedagogy's experiential learning sequence is similar to D. A. Kolb's (2015) explanation of the deep learning cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. However, Freire (1970) replaces thinking with transformative dialectic to emphasize the politics and interconnectedness of reflection and

action. Critical pedagogy advocates that a deep understanding of a topic is attained by challenging existing knowledge (Freire, 1970). Thus, deep learning in experiential critical pedagogy contrasts with traditions of rote or surface learning, were merely repeating dominant concepts is sufficient (Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Chin & Brown, 2000; Freire, 1970). Instead, critical pedagogy challenges students to critique existing structures of power, accepted theories, and ways of learning, then reflect and act. Thus, students are encouraged to address epistemological concerns of who knows what and why they are required to obediently learn this information (Freire, 1970). Consequently, critical pedagogy challenges students to find creative solutions to societal issues through the conception and implementation of innovative ideas (Costello et al., 2002; Serrano et al., 2018). Chin and Brown (2000) suggest that it is this type of deep thinking and questioning of conventional knowledge which has led to significant scientific discoveries. Thus, a critical pedagogy approach is apt for management education as it does not assume that there is a correct answer to be found; instead, it places responsibility for discovering solutions with the learner.

In critical pedagogy, perceptions of success are replaced with alternative measures of reward and outcome, traditional hierarchical professor and student relationships are revised, and the educational environment is deconstructed (Costello et al., 2002; Serrano et al., 2018). With its focus on altruistic and inclusive rewards (Freire, 1970), critical pedagogy diverges from the utilitarian ideology that dominates contemporary HE (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2016). Advocates of the utilitarian ideology suggest that the purpose of HE is to inculcate students with accepted knowledge that is valued in relation to the economic and social development of the existing hegemony (Freire, 1970). Thus, there is a tension between utilitarianism that emphasizes rewards associated with entrepreneurship, production, and avaricious individualism (Spencer, 1994), and the humanistic and socially beneficial goals of education (Freire, 1970; Menger, 1871/1976). However, Currie and Knights (2003) explain that management students expect and value a utilitarian approach, but they are intrigued by critical pedagogy's capacity to address its egocentric confines. Rather than emphasizing tensions, advocates of critical pedagogy have begun to describe students' receptiveness to combining it with utilitarian ideals. These students understand the significance of becoming reflective practitioners who question the implications of their actions; thus, they anticipate the reward for challenging accepted knowledge is their ability to self-manage diverse life goals (Bérubé & Gendron, 2022; Currie & Knights, 2003; Freire, 1970).

Consistent with a critical pedagogy approach, the inclusion of a self-selected live project as an assessment for learning ensures that the task is personalized, meaningful, and encourages reflection on what needs to be

achieved from the learning process (Chin & Brown, 2000; Kvale, 2007). This approach removes situational pressures and facilitates the different learning styles and cultural preferences of the home, international, and transnational partner students (A. Y. Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Consequently, having control over how they are assessed provides an opportunity to adopt a deep learning approach, where intrinsic motivation and purposeful self-directed study prevail (Biggs, 1985, 1987; Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Chin & Brown, 2000). Thus, the students must make a presage meta-learning decision of whether to adopt a surface learning or deep learning approach (Biggs, 1985, 1987). To inform this decision prompts summarizing the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards of marginalism, superior utility, and its subjective value are introduced to manipulate perceptions of instrumentality. The aim is to empower the students, explaining that choosing a surface learning approach has unfavorable present and future time perspective consequences. Thus, the meta-learning decision is best described as high-risk/high reward. Therefore, choosing to engage in deep learning, rather than playing it safe to achieve a grade, is a risk that is rewarded with superior utility and a higher subjective value (Costello, et al., 2002; Menger, 1871/1976).

Acknowledging the student's receptiveness to diverse rewards and outcomes, the SEM learning approach is attentive to co-creating the assessment for learning as part of the process. For example, to support assessment for learning (Kvale, 2007), the lectures and seminars become collaborative student-led workshops where formative plans are discussed, and feedforward provided. The assessment submission dates are decided by the students, as are the topics of their assessments. As Boud and Falchikov (2007) suggest, the students initially find participating in assessment co-creation disconcerting, but they quickly take ownership of their learning journey. To ensure that less engaged students also learn, the assessments for learning are constructively aligned (Biggs, 2011). The three assessments for learning are authentic by design and are assessed by professors and event users in relation to the world of practice (Boud, 2007; Kvale, 2007). The three SEM assessments are (1a) a 3,000-word group event plan, (1b) the implementation of a financially viable event, and (2) a 2,500-word individual evaluation of theory in practice and a self-reflection on the learning journey.

Prompting Marginalism in Practice

At the beginning of the SEM module, the students are provided with information regarding the assessment modes, what they are expected to achieve, and in what context. They are also introduced to Menger's (1871/1976) theories as a motivational prompt. Photo-finish imagery is used to symbolize the

marginalism of winning fairly through hard work. The aim is to motivate the choice of which meta-learning approach to employ on the module. This prompt is expected to be challenged in a critical pedagogy environment. Therefore, the students are encouraged to communicate with their peers at other HEIs to attain an understanding of how their competitors for jobs are being taught and assessed. The purpose of these conversations is to ensure that the students are aware that they have a unique opportunity to enhance and demonstrate their superior utility to gain a competitive advantage.

Cognizant of warnings in previous studies that employers do not value learning experiences that are perceived to be attained on a student project (Sealy, 2018); the SEM students are requested to take ownership of their learning from the outset. Professors act as critical friends, providing support and guidance, but no resources, client lists, or financial backing. In preparation for their impending role as managers, the students are responsible for acquiring everything that they need to implement the event, usually by working entrepreneurially to procure a partner or sponsor. Furthermore, the students are required to be proactive by creating an independent brand, logo, and marketing proposition for their event group; any attempt to associate their group with the university is discouraged. Although cooperative learning techniques are employed, this holistic learning approach enables the SEM groups to promote themselves as creative entrepreneurial event management professionals with expected utility, rather than a cohort of students working on an assessment. As such, the module provides the SEM students with a sense of independence and shared accountability, albeit within a well-established supportive learning framework.

Consistent with the tenets of critical pedagogy, the events aim to deliver social good through their entrepreneurship. In a typical year, SEM events will attract 1,500 people, secure £5,000 in sponsorship, and create a surplus of £10,000 for charity. Module attendance is above 90%, satisfaction with the learning experience is typically 100%, and average student grades are in the mid-60s. Thus, the grades are toward the top-end of the 55% to 65% average expected in English HE where the pass mark is 40%. However, grades are a poor indicator of marginalism and subjective value, whereas employability provides an external perspective. Amid the pandemic in the summer of 2020, SEM students secured employment with several prominent organizations. A few used their entrepreneurial utility to start consultancy and fitness businesses, and consistent with the SEM philosophy of encouraging life-long learning, several progressed onto Masters-level study. Thus, the 2019/2020 student achievements were consistent with previous pre-pandemic years.

The SEM learning environment is co-created to motivate students to attain superior utility by learning and practicing transferable competencies. It informs

career paths, creates a network of contacts, fosters self-confidence, creativity, responsibility, and acts as a showcase for superior utility. Nevertheless, the students' achievements only demonstrate outcomes, not the processes that are central to Biggs (1985), D. A. Kolb (2015), and Menger's (1871/1976) theories. To answer the research questions and reveal whether prompts motivate meta-learning approaches employed to attain marginally superior utility irrespective of grades, the student's voice is required.

Methodology

This article aimed to observe and explain the motivation for individual and collective learning processes by focusing methodological attention on the unforeseen, unplanned, and spontaneous responses experienced during disruptions caused by COVID-19. This was achieved through the methodological triangulation of ethnography and interpretive phenomenology (Maggs-Rapport, 2000). The methodological triangulation followed the anthropological approach, respecting the student voices and utilizing theory to represent their learning journey in a meaningful way (Katz & Csordas, 2003). Thus, methodological triangulation enabled the students' experiences to be observed to provide insight into what they did collectively in relation to the disrupted learning environment and for the methodological individualistic meanings related to why they did it to be analyzed and interpreted in relation to theory.

Participants

Reflexivity is required to perform as an ethnographic research instrument (Jerolmack & Khan, 2017) and to acknowledge the political act of teaching (Freire, 1970). I, the principal investigator, have led the SEM module for 15 years. Before academia, I worked in industry as a Project Development Consultant and in international logistics, enabling me to attain the real-world practical and theoretical knowledge that enhances management students' learning experiences (Iwu et al., 2021). My philosophy of teaching is related to the egalitarian notions of empathy and enhanced life choices. Thus, I was motivated to use the disruptions caused by COVID-19 to develop the students' knowledge and competencies, using the opportunity to enhance their utility. Similarly, in anticipation that the disruptions presented a phenomenon worthy of study, I sought ethical approval to formalize the data collection processes routinely employed to facilitate the module delivery.

Although eleven nationalities were represented, the 2019/2020 cohort was a purposive convenience sample (Patton, 1990), selected due to their proximity as participants and fit with the research questions. All 59 participants were

final year BSc Sport Management students, studying SEM as a core module. All were aware that the no-detriment option was available.

Methods and Data Collection

Critical pedagogy compels professors to observe what Menger (1883/2009) describes as methodological individualism. Menger (1883/2009) explains that individualism is not singular. Instead, it is the collective involvement in a distinct experience that subsequently informs perceptions of subjective value (Menger, 1883/2009). Similarly, A. Y. Kolb and Kolb (2009) advocate that experiential learning research should refer to individuals interacting in groups.

Data were collected from September 2019 until October 2020, the period spanning the emergence and initial responses to COVID-19. Consistent with the requirements of robust ethnography and interpretive phenomenology, diverse methods were employed. At first, data were collected using observations of the students on a learning journey. Non-observable actions were supplemented with "*conversations in place*" (Anderson, 2004, p. 254), and the submission of eleven 3,000-word event plans. This combination of methods gave students a voice and provided a means of understanding hidden meanings related to the challenges of experiential learning.

In April 2020, in response to the disruptions caused by COVID-19, an online viva assessment of learning was substituted for the assessment for learning event implementation. The viva assessment of learning enabled the conversations in place to be formalized in the form of eleven focus groups. Consistent with Chin and Brown's (2000) recommendations, the focus groups invited conversations to explain how and why the students independently learned their responses to the phenomena of disruption. These conversations also enabled comparisons of individual and collective learning approaches and motivations to be made. Focus group data were collected from six groups of students in England on 24th April 2020 and five groups of students in HK on 19th June and 16th October 2020. The focus groups provided 14 hours of recordings for analysis.

Two weeks after the viva, 59 individual 2,500-word evaluation and self-reflection reports were submitted. In these reports, the students evaluated theory in practice and reflected on how the holistic learning journey had affected their self-perceptions of employability. Conversations in the module debrief meetings, where the students and professor reflected on and evaluated the learning experience, concluded the data collection methods. The thematic analysis of the diverse data provided patterns of meaning into how the marginalism of utility and its subjective value act as motivators across the cohort group.

Ethical Considerations

There is a power imbalance between professors and students, with the potential for perceived coercion when the latter is involved in educational research. Despite the module owning the submitted assessments, the students were asked to provide consent for their informal conversations to be used for this article after the module had finished. Consistent with the collaborative nature of the module, all agreed to allow their journey to be reported.

Data Analysis

The purpose of the analysis was to conceptualize connectedness in the subjective perspectives using an interpretive lens to derive layers of meaning. To capture the manifest and latent meanings and make sense of the data, a thematic analysis technique was employed (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 2014). The analytical process began with open coding of the data, by adding comments during several readings. The coding aimed to overlap the strengths of each methodology by identifying ethnographic themes then applying cognitive reasoning to the phenomenon (Maggs-Rapport, 2000). Of particular interest were the motivations to attain utility in the form of can-do competencies, meta-learning approaches, and whether the utility was perceived to be marginally superior. Biggs's (1985, 1987) meta-learning framework was employed to analyze what learning approach had been used, this enabled similar codes to be identified and grouped into themes using axial coding. Lastly, selective coding was employed to connect the themes to theory in a coding map. The purpose of the interpretive analysis was to review and revise the mapped themes into an articulate narrative.

   Finally, the selective coding map was discussed with colleagues and students to triangulate the data interpretation. To provide rigor, alternative interpretations were explored and excluded. This ensured that the data analysis had credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To conclude, it was agreed that the data interpretation tells an empirically defensible story that represents the students' voices and the phenomenological interpretation. In the following section, I discuss themes related to prompting the attainment of marginally superior utility, the rationale for developing an adjusted assessment, how theory into practice is challenged in critical pedagogy, proactively anticipating industry needs, and the marginalism of utility attained on the learning journey. The narrative is presented as a linear journey, consisting of one student cohort voice with many motives, to explain the processes central to Biggs (1985), D. A. Kolb (2015), A. Y. Kolb and Kolb (2009), and Menger's (1871/1976) theories.

Findings

Prompts as a Motivator

Students are motivated by any opportunity designed to provide beneficial outcomes that are scarce and unavailable to their peers (Serrano, et al., 2018). Reflections on the pandemic learning journey revealed how prompts related to marginalism had motivated the SEM students to seize this unique opportunity. Without ever using the precise terminology, the students explained that prompting the attainment of superior utility with a higher subjective value had informed their presage meta-learning decisions before the COVID-19 disruptions. The prompts had also informed their re-evaluated meta-learning decisions when the learning environment was disrupted by COVID-19. Group 4 explained that "*we continued to believe what you told us* [about marginalism]. *It seems to make sense that the best people get the best jobs*." Likewise in HK, Group 10 stated that they '*trusted their teachers*'. Previous research supported the use of prompts to motivate learning strategies (Biggs, 1985; Boud & Falchikov, 2007; Chin & Brown, 2000; Filipić, 2010; Simons et al., 2000). However, in this case, prompts related to attaining scarce and marginally superior utility with a higher subjective value became a motivational device in two distinct experiential learning environments (pre-and during the pandemic). In both environments, prompts were fundamental to the pedagogic approach, which aimed to ensure that the students have an advantage in their preparedness for the transition to employment and future learning (Costello et al., 2002; Simons et al., 2000).

Rather than focusing on summative assessments, the module adopts what D. A. Kolb (2015) describes as a holistic adaptive approach to emphasize the benefits of learning from experience. This approach was beneficial in the transition between learning environments, enabling every positive and negative experience to be utilized as a learning opportunity. At this stage of their degree, the students were aware that they cannot improve external perceptions of their utility by changing their program of study or the university attended. There is also little time to improve their degree classification. Therefore, engaged, and motivated students seek learning opportunities that marginally improve their self-perceptions of subjective value.

Attaining Marginal Utility

The 2019/2020 academic year was initially uneventful. Motivated by prompts associated with marginalism, utility, and its subjective value, by the end of semester one each group had created a brand, formed partnerships with

sponsors and a charity, and were in the final stages of adding value to their events. Thus, the students had demonstrated similar levels of motivation and utility to the cohorts preceding them. The students were ready to implement their events between February and April in England, and April and June in HK. At this stage, the expectation was that the SEM cohort would continue to learn and apply the event management competencies described in previous studies (Kashef, 2015; Sealy, 2018). Predictably, the planning process had revealed a marginalism between each group's competencies. For example, one of the golf groups had negotiated free use of the course, whereas the other had contracted to pay the full commercial rate for the same venue. This marginalism in the professional competency of negotiation was a regular part of the critical pedagogy learning and assessment process, which reveals utility differences among the SEM groups.

This was not a normal year. COVID-19 disrupted the module's critical pedagogy learning and assessment strategy. University management and module professors requested that all SEM groups cancel their events with immediate effect on March 12th, resulting in the live project, the event implementation, not being actioned as planned. Group 6 reflected on canceling their event:

> *It was a bittersweet thing having to cancel. It was a good thing. Rather than us getting a job and experiencing a crisis there, we have experienced something big. No other years of sport management have had to deal with this, and I don't assume it will ever happen again, hopefully. It is quite a unique thing that we went through.*

Following the cancellation, we had an option to adjust the implementation assessment or accept the no-detriment policy by abandoning the module. But doing nothing has consequences for the student and conscientious professors. Implementing an event enables the students to demonstrate the can-do competencies central to utility and subjective value. Thus, despite having already achieved the 80-credits required to graduate, motivated by the prompt of attaining superior utility, the students requested an alternative assessment (the online viva). Allowing the students to choose how to be assessed is consistent with the collaborative environment of critical pedagogy.

The students were not required to complete the viva assessment, due to the no-detriment regulations adopted by all English HEI; however, 100% of them chose to participate. By completing the adjusted module assessment, the students demonstrated a level of motivation, resilience, and commitment to learning for the sake of learning. The SEM cohort's meta-learning strategy contrasts with previous study findings, which suggest that students focus on

grades, are resistant to authentic learning and assessment, and lack motivation (Filipić, 2010; Sealy, 2018; Serrano et al., 2018). As this discussion reveals, the difference between the students in previous studies and the SEM cohort is the latter's awareness of marginalism and the subjective value assigned to utility. Indeed, many of the students explained that they welcomed the disruption as a learning experience. Being aware that others were accepting no-detriment options and not attending taught sessions motivated their engagement.

Challenging Crisis Theory in Practice

The viva discussions revealed that the students were aware that their degree curriculum was mapped in a joined-up way, to ensure that they were empowered to benefit from the critical pedagogy experiential learning environment and utility enhancement processes adopted on the SEM module. This gave the students confidence and motivated them to continue their learning journey.

The students described the benefits of learning theoretical knowledge in SEM and other modules, but they also identified the incongruence of utilizing existing theory in practice (Freire, 1970; D. A. Kolb, 2015). The Media Management assessment required them to write a plan to manage a theoretical crisis, critiquing previous communication and practical strategies. Likewise, the Strategic Planning module had taught them how to develop an effective strategy, and SEM had provided theory into practice examples of risk management and contingency planning. However, group 6 explained that:

> *It is one thing planning in the classroom, but when you are in the deep end you realize the amount of pressure you have as an events team. You have got all these factors to consider.*

Similarly, Group 7 advised that "*theory suggests that crisis management is straightforward, you simply learn from experience. But how do you get that experience in a classroom?*" Managing complexity and gaining experience were consistent motivators to learn; for example, Group 4 described how:

> *We have had theory into practice examples, which gave us the knowledge and skills to put into practice . . . In theory, you know what the crisis is. But* [in the real world] *you are dealing with uncertainty.*

Therefore, although lectures "*provided theoretical processes that could be adapted to make a detailed framework"* (Group 6), a crisis creates "*a fear of the unknown*" Group 3). The unknown was related to testing theory in

practice; "*anticipating impact without knowing if it will work*," according to Group 2. The fear of managing a crisis in practice, rather than the theoretical approach adopted in Media Management was that "*if something goes wrong it is there for everyone to see*" (Group 3). Consequently, the students were aware that the process of managing a crisis in an experiential learning context has risks, producing potential positive and negative perceptual implications for their personal and expected utility and individual employability. Thus, fear of failure was a motivator for some students, inspiring them to learn new theories and can-do competencies to attain superior utility. A few adopted a surface learning approach to avoid failure; however, in contradiction to Biggs (1987), the majority employed a deep learning approach to ensure that they did not fail to attain superior utility.

Foreseeing Industry Needs

According to COVID-19 era studies, the sport industry will require people with scarce professional competencies related to creative crisis management to ensure its resurgence (Parnell et al., 2020; Ratten, 2020). This emerging need was anticipated by professors; it created the foresight used to prompt and motivate the actions central to experiential learning (D. A. Kolb, 2015). Thus, professors ensured that learning opportunities were made available regardless of the disrupted learning environment. Initially, the students focused on learning to manage a real-world crisis. It was only later when they reflected on their current preparedness for the transition into employment, that the students realized that they had intuitively seized the opportunity to attain unique can-do competencies with a marginally higher subjective value in the sport industry. Thus, the experiential learning approach provided an opportunity to learn and practice current professional competencies to achieve interconnected intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. It also provided an opportunity to foresee emerging industry needs, which informed present and future time perspective motivations for deep learning that was never expected to be assessed.

As the pandemic started to spread, most of the groups had anticipated that they would be required to cancel their events and were proactive in planning their management strategy before they were instructed to abandon their plans. Consistent with existing prevention and coping strategies, Group 9 explained that their risk assessment and management report had alerted them to the emerging challenges. Therefore, they instigated their crisis management plan before the directive to cancel. However, Group 9 were in HK. The students based in England described the confusing messages that they were dealing with. Group 4 explained that their partners had all adopted different crisis

management responses; the HEI had requested cancellation, their industry partners were operating as normal, and the English Government was sending mixed messages. For example, "*golf courses were open, but people were not allowed to travel to them*" (Group 6).

Similar to the conclusions of COVID-19 era studies (Parnell et al., 2020; Quick, 2020), the SEM students identified the need for a consistent approach to communication in a crisis, to avoid the "*errors and mistakes*" (Group 6) that they were witnessing in the meso and macro environment. These observations of diminished utility motivated the students to enhance their knowledge of communication strategies to avoid being perceived as unprofessional. Consistent with critical pedagogy experiential learning, the students challenged the accepted theoretical knowledge and power structures that were failing in wider society (Freire, 1970; Serrano et al., 2018). The SEM students recognized that the knowledge and skills that they had the opportunity to attain were a scarce utility, at this stage and throughout the pandemic it was obvious that communication strategies were being managed by people lacking can-do competencies.

Many of the SEM students reflected on their industry placements to explain why deep learning and critically analyzing theory in practice may offer them superior utility over current industry professionals. Group 5 explained that:

> When we started to manage this crisis, there were about ten theories that I could think of to use. I don't think that some people in the industry are even aware of ten theories, so they do not have the options that I feel that I have as a sport management graduate.

Reflecting on their learning experience, the students explained that they were motivated by the attainment of superior utility that would enhance their employability prospects; therefore, during the pandemic, they had engaged with creative crisis management literature and theories at a deeper level. Consistent with Menger's conceptualization of expected utility, Group 9 explained, that what you learn in HE "*is about giving your employer confidence in you, that you can manage a crisis.*" They had confidence that what they had learned and practiced provided superior utility; thus, their graduate knowledge had a higher subjective value.

The students suggested that communication "*was the biggest thing during the crisis. Not leaving anyone out of the loop and reassuring everyone*" (Group 4); this included professors and event partners. The students stated that they were motivated to avoid the errors and mistakes witnessed elsewhere. They described the need to be decisive; academic work demanded

discussion, but definite decisions were required in a real-world crisis (Quick, 2020). For the SEM students, being decisive demonstrated professionalism and avoided acting *"like panicked kids without a clue"* (Group 5). The students explained that they had actively discussed how to best utilize the theoretical communication strategies learned in Media Management. But distinct from the critical discussion of theory, now their communications were intended to demonstrate decisiveness by being prompt, clear with a simple message, honest, professional, and personal, offering tailored communication to diverse groups, yet providing a consistent message.

There was a degree of marginalism in how each group had learned and managed their communications. Indeed, Group 6 observed how some of their SEM peers had communicated and suggested that "*there is a difference between being professional and being robotic*." Thus, there was recognition within the cohort that some groups and individuals had attained superior utility to their peers. This difference was also obvious to the professors, with most groups being confidently proactive in their communications, whereas one event group were reactive and amateurish. Consistent with a surface learning approach, they had communicated to a range of partners without foresight or evaluation. Adopting a performance-orientated strategy focused on grades (Simons et al., 2000), they were indifferent to the consequences of their actions. Thus, their can-do competencies demonstrated a degree of utility that was in no way superior to their peers or a reasonably competent nongraduate. Event partners also recognized the marginal difference in utility and value offered by that group and one of their peers. Both groups had worked in partnership with the owner of an events company but only the engaged group were offered the opportunity to work for the business postpandemic. The events company had made an evidence-based comparison and decided that one of the groups had attained superior utility with a higher subjective value for their context-specific needs.

Applying knowledge in an innovative and adaptable manner took many forms in this experiential learning process. Although the students had already demonstrated creativity and entrepreneurship by planning an event, financing it, promoting their brand, and marketing themselves, the pandemic provided an opportunity to portray uniquely superior utility. Many of the groups used their technological proficiency and adaptability to demonstrate creative entrepreneurship combined with a desire to do public good; for example, by "*moving the auction online to raise money for the charity*" (Group 3). They argued that "*it would have been easy to do nothing, but our aim was to raise money for the charity"* (Group 6), being seen to meet stated objectives was a management competency that they coveted.

Furthermore, Group 4 explained that the pandemic had provided them with an opportunity to demonstrate that "*we can think creatively and can manage a crisis.*" Professional competencies in creativity and entrepreneurship are a scarce utility (Ratten, 2020). Consequently, the students acted with a duality of purpose. Group 8 explained that responsibility is a professional competency; therefore, as well as practicing their creative and entrepreneurial skills, the students were motivated by reputation management. They had established networks and realized that their reputation is a utility with subjective value. A focus on assessment or utilitarian rewards was absent from their reflective narratives. Most of the student responses to the crisis were implemented before the adjusted assessment was agreed; therefore, they had acted without anticipating a grade-based extrinsic reward.

Perceptions of Utility

Most students were motivated to demonstrate innovation and adaptability in response to opportunities provided by the pandemic. The SEM students anticipated that students at other HEIs would accept the no-detriment offer, which motivated them to seize an opportunity to attain superior utility. Group 4 elucidated the benefits of having the foresight to differentiate themselves from students who have not shared similar opportunities through experiential learning. They reasoned that:

> *If you write a 3000-word essay, that does not prove that you know anything. We have evidence, we can prove that we have done something and not just write about it. How we dealt with it gave us great PR, we looked professional. As a group, we are six individuals with unique case studies of how to manage a crisis, our professional reputations are secured. We made an impact despite not implementing our event.*

Likewise, Group 2 stated that "*we have unique experience, not many students have had to plan an event during a global pandemic, we have that experience under our belt.*" Similarly, Group 6 reflected that:

> *No one* [else] *our age is just finishing a degree with knowledge fresh in their mind that they have just canceled an event due to a pandemic. . . You can be book-smart, but unless you can apply it, you will not last long in the sport management sector. . . We have had to apply everything that we have learned in practice. Look at our journey from first year. . . If an employer looks at what we have had to deal with, what we had planned, and how we managed the crisis, well yeh. . . . We stand out from the other people I know because we have had to think on our feet.*

Consistent with Menger's (1871/1976) conceptualization of subjective value, the students had differing opinions on what their desired utility proposition was and how this motivated their learning journey. Some students were motivated by enhancing their employability, others wanted to attain new skills, and several wanted to improve their self-perception. Similar to Simons et al. (2000) findings, the desire for intrinsic or extrinsic reward appeared to have a negligible effect on the commitment to learning. A minority of students chose the meta-learning process consistent with a surface-achieving approach; they were interested in achieving a good grade (Biggs, 1987) rather than demonstrating can-do competencies. For them, learning was motivated by the utilitarian value of their degree classification. Nevertheless, what united this heterogeneous group of students is their perceptions of marginalism in personal and expected utility which meant that they all willingly engaged in optional learning and believed that they had benefited from their unique journey.

Conclusion

In this article, I began by demonstrating the need for students to differentiate themselves in the competition for employment or further study. Employing Menger's (1871/1976) theories of marginalism, superior utility, and subjective value, I explored Biggs (1985, 1987) and Chin and Brown's (2000) conjecture, what if prompts informed presage meta-learning decisions to encourage the attainment of marginally superior utility for students with diverse motivational goals. I responded to this conjecture by answering three research questions. In response to research question one, learning for the sake of learning was motivated by the complex reasons for attaining superior utility with a higher subjective value. The students initially discussed learning activities related to the workshop sessions. They also described the meta-learning processes required to attain new skills and knowledge in graphic design, content creation, video editing, and so on, to enhance their events. But none of this independent learning could be disassociated from the instrumentality of achieving a grade. It was in the narratives related to crisis management where examples of learning for the sake of learning emerged. The students suggested that professionalism and fear of failure motivated their independent learning of complex communication strategies, creative entrepreneurship, innovative uses of technology, empathetic leadership and teamworking, and so on. This knowledge was attained and implemented before the adjusted assessment was authorized and designed. Thus, the SEM students focused on attaining the utility of can-do competencies through self-determined levels of learning for the sake of learning irrespective of potential grade-based extrinsic rewards.

Removing the substitutability of a grade confirmed expectations of the transferability of lessons learned during the pandemic. Given the disrupted learning environment, the student's focus on utility related to crisis management is understandable. Yet, similar motivated approaches to attain the utility of can-do competencies have emerged in previous and subsequent occurrences of the SEM module. This is due to the promotion of the marginalism of utility and a future time perspective as a motivator and desired outcome. When experiential learning is combined with critical pedagogy students will always find a social issue to address; during the financial crisis sponsorship was problematic, during the Paralympics marginalization was prominent, and the obesity crisis in Western societies is omnipresent. Thus, professors should encourage students to recognize that addressing a societal issue is their unique learning opportunity. This requires mutual levels of trust in each other's can-do competencies. Most students respond to trust-based learning in a critical pedagogy environment because they have empathy and choose to do social good. They also seek personal rewards associated with utilitarianism and do not perceive these as oppositional outcomes (Damianidou & Phtiaka, 2016).

In response to research question two, the students sought diverse personal rewards for engaging in deep learning. The few who were motivated by the value of a grade achieved high marks for attaining theoretical knowledge, the others who were primarily motivated by employability, self-perception, and attaining transferable skills used their journey to create an evidence-base of can-do competencies. Subsequent conversations revealed that all students had self-awareness of their motives for learning (Biggs, 1985), and had attained marginally superior utility that they subjectively valued. However, the subjective value of a utility is not something that is decided solely by its creator; instead, peripheral observers will decide whether the students' claims are universally accepted. The program external examiner praised the students' deep meta-learning approach (Biggs, 1985), which had provided them with a marginally superior utility to their peers at other HEIs. Likewise, previous research revealed a scarcity of can-do competencies and suggested the most needed utilities post-pandemic are, crisis management (Ratten, 2020), entrepreneurial creativity (Ratten, 2020), communication (Quick, 2020), and innovation and adaptability (Davis, 2022). With their evidence-base to demonstrate attainment of marginally superior utility to satisfy emerging industry needs, the SEM students were rewarded with employment statistics comparable to pre-pandemic cohorts. Employers recognized the superior utility and subjective value offered by graduates who had chosen to attain can-do competencies in a disrupted learning environment.

Research question three asked what lessons professors can learn from prompting Menger's (1871/1976) theories to motivate learning. Students are

outcome-driven and will respond to opportunities offered in any learning environment, regardless of whether their meta-learning strategy encompasses deep or surface approaches (Biggs, 1985; Chin & Brown, 2000). Manipulating the instrumentality of perceived utility by relating it to marginalism and subjective value personalizes the learning experience. Therefore, the promise of intrinsic and extrinsic rewards informs motivations to learn as explained by goal theory, performance-orientation, or future time perspectives (Kauffman & Husman, 2004; Simons et al., 2000). Adopting a critical pedagogy approach in a discipline and HE system that measures outcomes against utilitarian goals, is one way for professors to enhance the marginalism of their students.

For example, SEM is a contradictory module. It seeks to enhance employability but adopts a critical pedagogy method. Consequently, the professor can motivate students to attain enhanced marginalism regardless of where their diverse self-managed life goals are on the continuum between utilitarian avaricious individuality and empathetic management values. Findings reveal that having an opportunity to attain superior utility to their peers is a key motivation to adopt a deep learning approach (Biggs, 1985), where future time goals inform present actions (Simons et al., 2000). Thus, students need to be prompted to inform them that engaging in deep learning will provide them with a superior utility with a higher subjective value than can be attained by other means. Regardless of what is meaningful to the student as a desired outcome, marginalism prompts motivate the attainment of superior utility due to what Wing Yan Man (2006) describes as the need to outdo perceived competitors. Thus, the prompt was interpreted as "be the best at what you want to do," with the collaborative and inclusive critical pedagogy approach alleviating a win at any cost attitude.

Cognizant of these answers, in this article, I addressed the limitation of Menger's (1871/1976) marginalism of utility theory when applied to learning. Menger (1871/1976) focused on the process of value creation at the point of consumption from the consumer (employer) perspective rather than the producer's (student) motives or desired outcomes. Conversely, Biggs' (1985, 1987) meta-learning framework is attentive to motives and outcomes. Recent advances in understanding how subjective value is co-created suggest that students also have needs to be satisfied. When university education no longer differentiates students, having the foresight to predict what employers consider subjectively valuable at the point of consumption and being motivated to attain and demonstrate it throughout the learning journey has obvious benefits. Thus, prompting awareness of marginalism to inform the metacognitive processes employed at the presage stage when choosing a meta-learning strategy contributes to Menger's (1871/1976) theory's usefulness. Because marginalism and value are

subjective, the presage factors are personalized. According to Biggs (1985, 1987), this makes it more likely that the student will decide to adopt a deep learning approach. Thus, they attain knowledge and can-do competencies that Menger (1871/1976) suggests are central to marginally superior utility. Findings reveal that combining Menger's (1871/1976) marginalism of utility theory with Biggs (1985, 1987) meta-learning framework creates a continuous learning cycle (D. A. Kolb, 2015) where the perceived subjective value of the outcome at the end of the journey informs personal presage decisions at the start of it. Thus, future time perspectives motivate present metacognitive decisions (Simons et al., 2000). An additional benefit of the proposed cycle is that perceptions of subjective value are constantly evolving; therefore, to maintain marginally superior utility, the student must commit to lifelong learning.

This article is not without limitations. The SEM students chose to study a vocationally relevant, high-employability, high salary management program. Therefore, they may be highly motivated without the marginalization prompt. Future research could employ an interpretive phenomenological analysis approach to explain individual student motivations and the specialized can-do competencies attained. Also, experiential learning makes attaining and demonstrating the can-do competencies associated with superior utility easier. Future research could explore whether students engaged in other forms of learning are equally receptive to prompts defining the diverse benefits of marginalism.

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