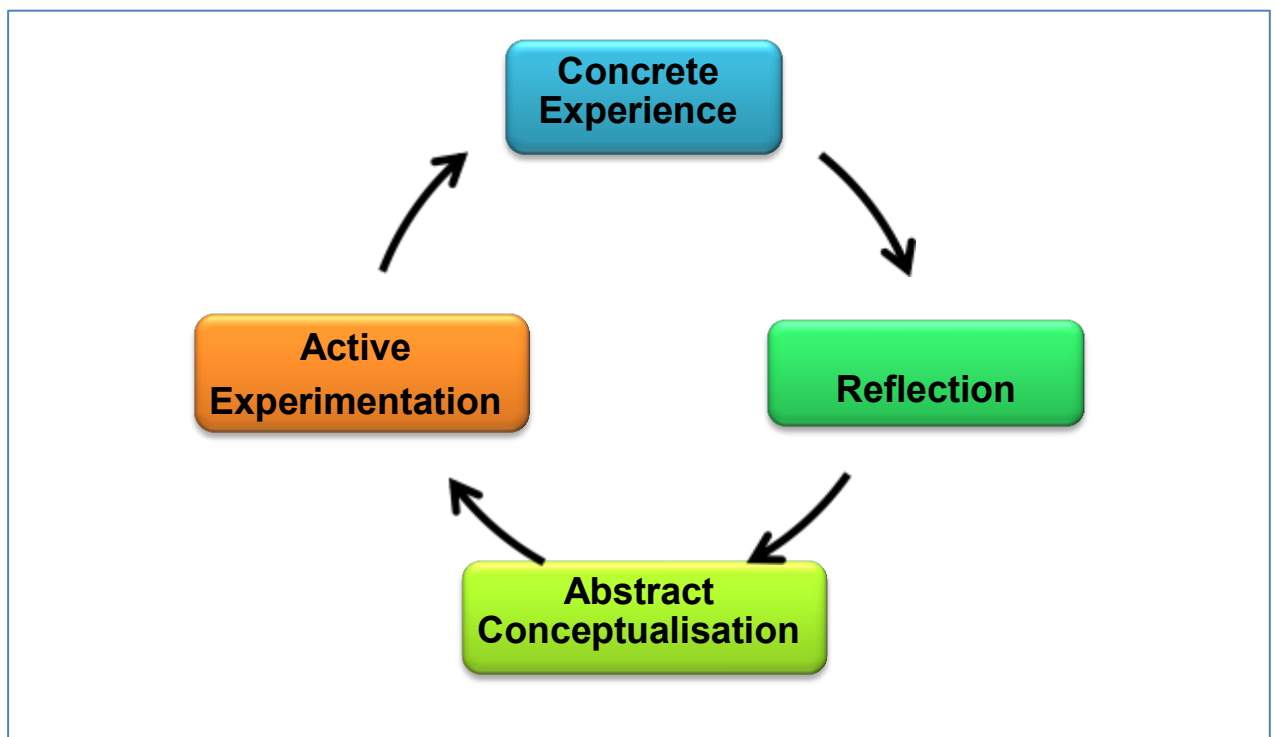


Experiential Learning

What is Experiential Learning?

Based on the concept of “learning by doing” by psychologist John Dewey, Kolb and Rogers built their models for experiential learning. Rogers (1969) highlighted the importance of experiential learning, which is about application knowledge, in contrast to cognitive learning, which is academic knowledge, e.g. vocabulary learning. Rogers believes that experiential learning addresses the needs and wants of individual and is related to personal change and growth. Kolb (1984) presented the four-stage cyclic process, namely Concrete Experience, Reflection, Abstract Conceptualisation and Active Experimentation. He also connected experiential learning and learning styles, highlighting how the difference among individual personalities and learning preferences may result in the inclination towards a particular stage of the stage.

Further explanation on Experiential Learning Cycle



According to Kolb, experiential learning can be described as a four-stage process, in which an individual can start from any stage but the sequence of the stages remains the same. Two stages (Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualisation) in the cycle involves experience while the other two (Reflection and Active Experimentation) involves transformation.

- ★ Concrete Experience: *Doing*. Through participation in learning activities, students get hands-on experience on problem-solving tasks. The experience is personal and involves individual affections.
- ★ Reflection: *Observing*. Students recall their memory or look at records of the learning activities, they review and reflect on the process either individually or in a group. Learners observe others' behaviour during the activities as well.
- ★ Abstract Conceptualisation: *Thinking*. Students generalise knowledge and theory from the previous experience based on the reflection.
- ★ Active Experiment: *Planning*. Students then modify existing concepts and knowledge with the new theory they come up with and apply in later occasions.

Key Principles of Experiential Learning

1. Learning is more efficient when the subject matter is relevant to the personal interests of the students
2. Learning which is threatening to the self (e.g., new attitudes or perspectives) are more easily assimilated and faster when external threats are at a minimum
3. Self-initiated learning is the most lasting and pervasive.
3. Students should have complete control over the entire learning process, its nature and direction
5. Self-evaluation should be the principle method of assessment.

Major Elements in Experiential Learning activities

★ **Meaning Making**

Learning through real life experience allows students to relate their knowledge to their daily lives. Hence, students can easier assimilate their knowledge and hence apply what they have learned. Providing context and giving students situations make them know the meaning of the tasks.

★ **Paradigm Shifting**

This refers to the change of students' implicit ideas, assumptions and beliefs. Experiential learning activities allow students to visualise, to understand and to enact the assumption and implications of different ideas and perspectives which can later help students' character development.

★ **Self-Understanding**

By reflecting on their own performance regularly and in a guided manner, students pay more attention to their own thinking. This kind of meta-thinking is especially important in personal change and growth.

Teachers' role in Experiential Learning

1. The teacher will set a positive atmosphere for learning
2. The teacher will act as a guide. This allows students to make mistakes and learn from them throughout the whole process. The teacher will clarify the concepts and the purposes of each stage whenever needed.
3. The teacher will give students learning resources and information both before and during the task when students are stuck.
4. The teacher will provide students with freedom to experiment during the task, so they are able to discover the solutions.
5. The teacher will share feelings and thoughts with learners but not dominating. This enables students to reflect on their own.

Examples

Making a "manual" of customer complaint

The following shows a learning activity used in tertiary education. First of all, students are asked to share their previous working experience and try to recall the experience handling customer complaints. They describe the details and share with their other classmates. After gathering and organizing real cases from the students, the teacher distributes the cases of poor customer service to groups of students. Students are asked to discuss a solution to the problem. They are asked to think about how to handle the case and later the sequence and steps of actions. Each group is asked to share their solutions with other groups by mini role-play of customers and staff members. Next, the groups discuss on the similarities and differences on how they deal with the complaints. The last stage of the activity requires students to write down their steps of handling customer complaints on flash cards. They then create a big multi-directional map by grouping the same procedures in different scenarios.

Reference

- Alan, G., & Casey, A. (2006). A study exploring managers' knowledge sharing strategies through the learning styles of Experiential Learning Theory [electronic resource].
- Beard, C. (2010). *The experiential learning toolkit: blending practice with concepts*. London: Kogan Page.
- Berry, M. J., & Robinson, T. (2012). An Entrance to Exit Polling: Strategies for Using Exit Polls as Experiential Learning Projects. *PS: Political Science And Politics*, 45(3), 501-505.
- Freeman, R., & Le Rossignol, K. (2010). Taking Risks--Experiential Learning and the Writing Student. *Australian Journal Of Adult Learning*, 50(1), 75-99.
- Goh, K. (2009). *Character development through service and experiential learning*. Singapore: Prentice Hall.
- Provenzo, E. F., Butin, D. W., & Angelini, A. (2008). *100 experiential learning activities for social studies, literature, and the arts, grades 5-12*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Corwin Press.
- Wurdinger, S. D., & Carlson, J. (2010). *Teaching for experiential learning: five approaches that work*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Education.