



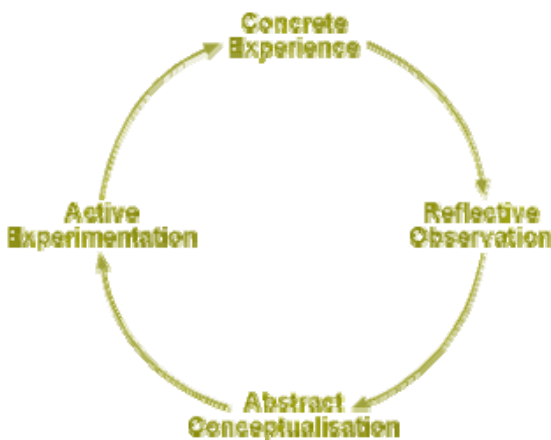
Canadian Alliance for Community Service-Learning
l'Alliance canadienne pour l'apprentissage par le service communautaire

Experiential Education

What is Experiential Education?

David Kolb describes experiential education as engaged learning in which the learner experiences a visceral connection to the subject matter. Good experiential learning combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis. It is a challenging, active, student-centred process that impels students toward opportunities for taking initiative, responsibility, and decision making.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle



Key Features of Experiential Education:

- Learner centred
- Based on the premise that people learn best by doing
- Occurs as a direct result of learner's participation in events and activities
- Utilizes the learner's own reflection upon their experiences
- Holistically addresses the cognitive, emotional, and physical aspects of the learner
- Suggests that learning is active and dynamic

Experiential Education as a Learning Model

Kolb developed the most established model of experiential learning. In his model the process begins with an experience ("concrete experience"), followed by reflection ("reflective observation"). The reflection is then assimilated into a theory ("abstract conceptualization") and finally these new (or reformulated) hypotheses are tested in new situations ("active experimentation"). The model is a recurring cycle within which the learner tests new concepts and modifies them as a result of the reflection and conceptualization.

Experiential learning can therefore be defined in terms of a learning model "which begins with the experience followed by reflection, discussion, analysis and evaluation of the experience. The assumption is that we seldom learn from experience unless we assess the experience, assigning our own meaning in terms of our own goals, aims, ambitions and expectations. From these processes come the insights, the discoveries, and understanding. The pieces fall into place, and the experience takes on added meaning in relation to other experiences. All this is then conceptualized, synthesized and integrated into the individual's system of constructs which he imposes on the world, through which he views, perceives, categorizes, evaluates and seeks experience."

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