

Exploring lived experience abroad: Norway

By Tim Speed



Research Question

- Using an ethnographic method to collect reflective experiences from adults taking part in a semester abroad in Norway

Introduction

Programmes are often framed as highly transformative and immersive. However, these studies focus on the result of a study abroad programme.

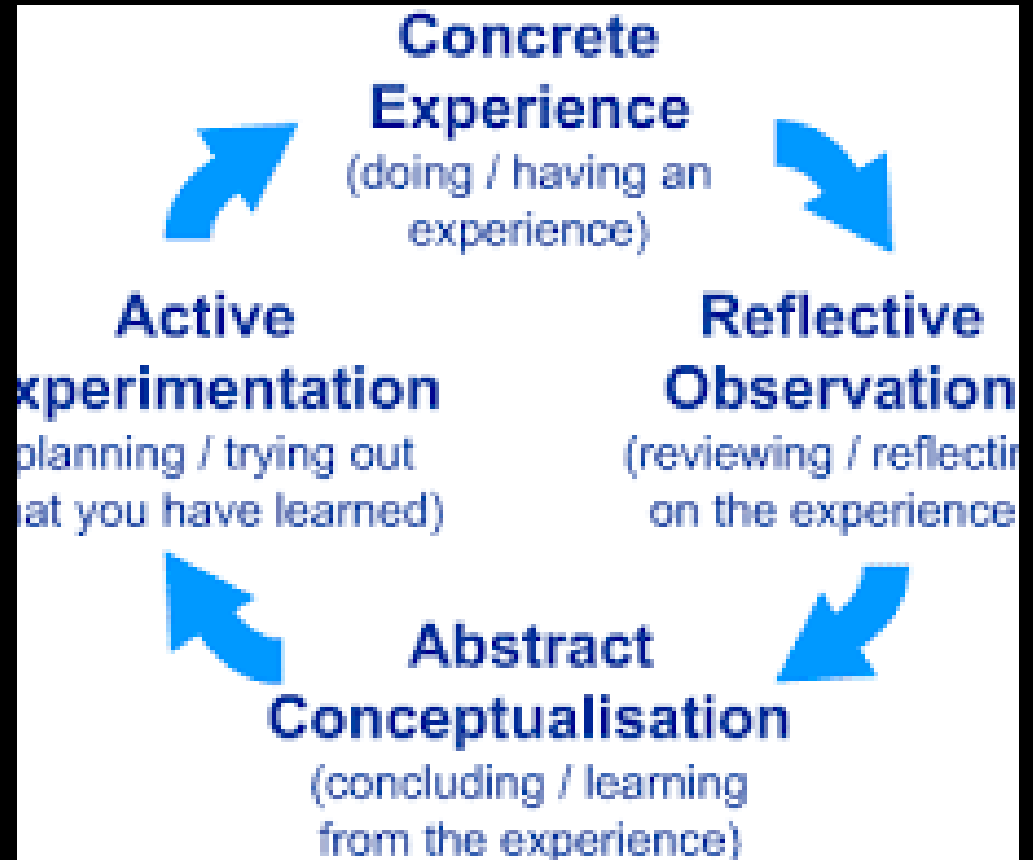
Less is mentioned about the day to day lived experience of a programme.

An ethnographic approach (consisting of fieldnotes and interviews) will allow me to explore the finer, emotional details of a study abroad programme (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011)

Norway itself provides a unique setting for this study

Aims of the research activity

- Explore how adults on a semester abroad in Norway detail and reflect upon their experiences through autoethnographic means and interviews.
- All findings will be interpreted through Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 1984)



Methodology

Approach, Data collection and analysis



Ethnography – Immersion in a shared environment and interacting with others within it



Autoethnography – Researcher's personal notes and journals about their reflections. Journaling and fieldnotes



Interviews



Analysis:



Data will be analysed according tot rends in qualitative feedback (Braun &Clarke, 2006)



Kolb's cycle is the guiding structure

Findings – Concrete experience



Stage one of the cycle describes what actually happened



Across participants, experiences were centered around challenge and difficulty



First time skiing



Demanding trips



Communication misunderstandings withing a multicultural group

Findings – Reflective Observation

The second stage observes how participants made sense of what happened

Reflection occurred through journaling and group reflections with fellow group members

Participants would analyse their failures and successes

Aligns with Deweys (1938) view that reflection transforms experience into meaning and with Braun and Clarke (2006)

Findings – Abstract conceptualization

This stage is where participants develop further insights into improvement

Learners gain new understanding of how they learn

Learnt the value of trial and error and experiential learning

Developed greater intercultural awareness

Findings – Active experimentation

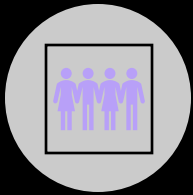
The final stage of the cycle

Participants apply what they have learnt (Kolb, 1984)

Participants adjusted their mannerisms and practises

This demonstrates learning being applied directly withing the study-abroad context

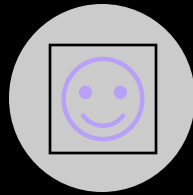
Findings – Longitudinal learning



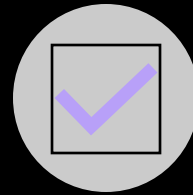
PARTICIPANTS
SHOWED CLEAR
LONGITUDINAL
LEARNING



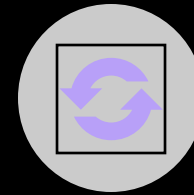
MORE RESILIENT



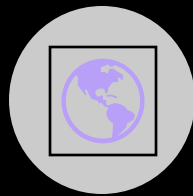
MORE CONFIDENT



MORE
COMFORTABLE



REFLECTS A CYCLE
OF CONTINUOUS
LEARNING



STRONGER
INTERCULTURAL
COMPETENCE

Findings – Transfer of learning

 Participants describe how they will transfer their learning

 Applying outdoor and organisational skills

 Integrating experiential learning into their teaching practise

 Improved communication skills

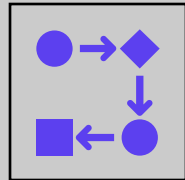
 Improved leadership skills

 Beard and Wilson (2018)

Discussion



The use of Kolb's model as a guide provided a clear structure to make sense of how students learnt and developed from their time abroad



The time spent abroad served as a constant cycle of learning and improvement.



My methods (ethnographic and autoethnographic) allowed for the capture of all of them emotional and cultural aspects, often missed in research about study abroad programmes.

Conclusions



Reference list

- Beard, C. and Wilson, J.P. (2018) *Experiential learning: A handbook for education, training and coaching*. 4th edn. London: Kogan Page.
- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), pp. 77–101.
- Dewey, J. (1938) *Experience and education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Ellis, C., Adams, T.E. and Bochner, A.P. (2011) 'Autoethnography: An overview', *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 12(1).
- Kolb, D.A. (1984) *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

AI acknowledgement

AI Tool (with url)	Date used	Why did you use this tool	Example prompt(s)
<i>Copilot</i> https://copilot.microsoft.com	01/05/2026	<i>Gathering sources</i>	<i>Find previous sources regarding the effect of study abroad programmes</i>

Questions?

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