

Assessment 1- BMOE4005

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Adventure Filmmaking

In 1984, David Kolb released a theory about his methods in experiential learning. The theory discusses a four-point cycle, including the following stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. The most important factor of this theory, to my understanding, is that experiential learning is a cycle. It allows participants to learn through trial and error by repeating the process in a practical way so that they have an ever-increasing understanding. "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984,). I believe this quote sums up the idea of growth through repetition and how each experience is going to be unique and help towards your learning. I've had many experiences of my own that apply to this theory and how I have learnt from observing and participating in various activities. An idea that opposes this theory is one by philosopher Paulo Freire. In his book 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed', Freire suggests that we are taught things by others passing on their knowledge to us. "Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor". In other words, he suggests that to learn you must simply retain information without any activity required. There is no self-discovery or learning on your own involved. In my opinion, I would have to say I agree with both Freire and Kolb's theories as I find I learn best when I have first learnt in a classroom about something but then go out in a practical based session to apply that knowledge and learn from any mistakes made.

If there is one thing I have learnt from the outdoors it is that no two experiences are the same. Many factors have to be taken into account for how your activity may go such as weather, your attitude and the ecosystem around you are just a few. In the book 'The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods Vol. 1, No. 20', William James wrote about how we live in an everchanging environment that means no experienced can be lived twice. "No one single type of connection runs through all the experiences that compose it". Furthermore, repeating Kolb's cycle can only enhance your knowledge as you will experience many different variables and learn from them all each time. Based on the learning cycle, Kolb also believed there are two choices we have when it comes to learning. He presented these choices on an axis and claimed that neither conflicting variables could be possible at the same time. These two variables are the Processing Continuum and the Perception Continuum. By processing Kolb meant how we attack each task we have in front of us and perception is how we think and feel about it. So in order to perceive an experience, and learn from what you have done, you must process it by doing it. The one learning experience that really sticks with me is when I completed my Bronze Duke of Edinburgh Award. Using Kolb's theory I will talk through each step of the cycle and how I learnt and developed my skills over time.

So, to begin the cycle you must start by engaging in your activity. This is called the concrete experience. The idea behind the theory is you are converting experience into knowledge. In order to learn, you must participate; it's no good just reading or watching. My concrete experience was my practice expedition for DofE. In my group, we planned to hike around our local area so as not to get lost and to enable us to focus on other factors. We split up the equipment equally to carry including the tent, our food and all of our personal belongings. Early on into the hike, we found ourselves overheating and struggling in the July sun. We also found that a few people were falling behind as they were struggling with the weight of their backpacks. The hike was a two day trip with an overnight camping stay. Luckily, all our team members were experienced campers and so the night was no trouble for us. Having the experience of a practice run meant that we were able to learn what did and didn't work for us all. If we had not had that experience and perhaps just read a few articles on how to complete your DofE I know we would have definitely struggled as we would not have made any mistakes to learn from.

Leading on from that, the next stage in Kolb's cycle is reflective observation. This is the process of reflecting and reviewing the experience. In relation to Kolb's theory, this would lie on the perception axis. In order to reflect there must be a problem. As philosopher John Dewey who theorised education said: "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting on experience." What we found ourselves reflecting on most was the weather conditions in which we did our hike and the weight of the equipment we each had to carry. The sun was very hot so many of us struggled. On the other hand, we did find an upside to the time of the year in that the days were much longer as we had more sunlight. According to the website worlddata.info the average amount of daylight in July in the UK is 16hrs 14mins with the sun rising around 4-5 am each day. Furthermore, this meant we were able to get up early after our night of camping to begin our second-day hike before it got too hot. In terms of our luggage, we found that a few of the weaker members of the group struggled with the weight. In order to help at the time, a few of the stronger group members carried their bags to give them a rest however this then meant that the stronger members began to struggle and overall slowed the whole process down.

The next stage in Kolb's theory is abstract conceptualization, which is where you learn and conclude from your experience. What we concluded, in terms of the issue with our bags, was that instead of dividing the weight equally among us we would instead give a few of the heavier items to the stronger members of the team. This meant we could each have a suitable weight in our bags that complimented our strength. Our next conclusion was that we needed to find a way to cool ourselves during the hike and so we decided that we would find a route that directed us past a source of water. Our DofE was completed in the Lake District, which is home to 16 lakes as well as lots of streams that run off the mountains and so we had no trouble doing this.

Finally, we made it to the final expedition that awarded us with our Bronze DofE, which in terms of the cycle was the Active Experimentation. This was our chance to put all of our conclusions and new planning ideas into action and so on the axis, we were in the process continuum. To begin, we spread the weight of the equipment out so we each carried a suitable amount for our strength and found that this worked much better and meant we could hike much more efficiently. The walk was still hot and leading up to the day we noticed this would be the case from the weather reports. The thought of having to pack lots of water with us that would weigh us down and cause us to struggle like we did last time was not an option and so instead we researched how we could find freshwater supplies on our walk. We each invested in some water purification tablets just to make sure the water we drank would be ok and looked up information online about how to find clean sources. We found websites just like ukclimbing.com, which is an online forum that allows fellow hikers to share their knowledge, and learnt that we would need to find a strong flowing stream that was not near any livestock. During our expedition, we all filled up and drank from a stream and none of us were ill. It was a great way of cooling us down and keeping us hydrated without having to carry around huge amounts of water.

From discussing and exploring more into the experiential learning theory, and applying it to a learning situation of my own, I have discovered that the cycle is not a process of repetition it is in fact a way of evolving. From my first practice hike to my final DofE expedition I found that I had evolved in a way to learn how to use the ecosystem around me to my advantage and to develop my teamwork skills by assessing strengths and weaknesses and working to them. Furthermore, I think that Kolb's theory is definitely one to use when it comes to learning new skills. It offers the perfect balance of preparation, reflection and participation that means you can go on adventures and do so safely with a knowledge of not only your environment but also of yourself and how you may react in certain situations.

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