

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning is an integral part of how we learn, everyone does it consciously and unconsciously depending on their personal knowledge of experiential learning (Fenwick, 2002). Being able to look on an event and bettering yourself, improving on it, allowing you to gain experience to help you overcome future events. Looking at my own experiences, I will use Kolb's model to reflect on that event.

Kolb (1984) states, that to have an effective learning experience you need to incorporate the four key aspects of his model, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. This shows us that all four of these components are needed to have a conclusive meaning.

Concrete Experience

Kolb (1984) notes, concrete experience is having a situation that you can look back on either being significant or not. Two years ago, while working at Parents Get Lost (PGL) I was carrying out my job as an activity instructor. My activities for the day were archery and triple giant swing. The day started mild, the weather was slightly warm, and air was heavy. Everyone wasn't wearing their coats and didn't bring their waterproofs for the day, and we weren't going back until after the second session. We start of by making sure we liaison, with the teachers to make sure they have all the medication for that specific group, we must be very diligent as all the instructors knew that this schools' teachers weren't always organised and many times the teachers would forget the most important medication like EpiPens and inhalers. After the teachers were ready, we proceeded to put all the harnesses on the children to better prepare themselves for the activities.

After everything was ready, we headed on our thirty-minute walk to the session. Completing the first and second session we went to the cabins and sent the children to lunch. The weather stayed the same throughout the three hours till lunch, as I sat in the lunchroom the weather changed rapidly and starting raining heavily. Ground became sodden and the paths became slippery. We were told that sessions were going ahead as usual, and so I took my next group to giant swing down the slopes and hills. The rain became heavier as I took the group down to the session and water started flowing down the path. As we were walking by, I saw that the water was taking some of the sediment from the path but didn't identify that as a problem. Arriving at the giant swing the ground felt soft and uneasy, I realised that the water from the

slopes had filled the area on and around the activity base. Continuing the session, the water started to rise more and more. After an hour I radioed the senior instructors and asked if I should carry on or stop the session, they radioed back and told me to carry on. The weather became worse, and I settled on the idea to stop the session as the standing water by the climbing wall and the giant swing started to move fast. I decided that the best and safest place was inside the climbing wall, this place is where we could collect all the children together in one place and so we could count them and keep them high enough from the fast-moving water. After 10 minutes the rain started to slow and the water started to slow down and lower, I thought it was safe enough to get the kids to the shallowest part of the moving water so we could get picked up by the van. After the children got picked up, we inspected the damage and found out that the river burst its banks 200 meters down the track. Fortunately, everyone was safe and minimal damage was delt to the activity bases. My seniors after the whole experience, did not reflect on the problem that occurred, they carried on as normal and sent more groups down the track to carry on the activities.

Reflect Purposefully

Reflective process starts when the experience is happening or completed (Kolb, 1984). Within my event I found that my critical thinking was the positive aspect thinking on my toes allowing me to make quick decisions resulting everyone to be safe. I felt quite calm and collected throughout the dilemma, this showed by my rational thinking of keeping everyone together. In my opinion, I could have made better preparations before my session transpired, a lot of preparation would have allowed me to predict my dilemma before it happened. I would have also been able to contradict my higher ups with facts and information, to better understand the situation that face me and other instructors on that day. In my opinion the situation went in my favour as my group that I was instructing was very calm and timid. I believe that if I had a group that dynamically did not work together then my time to think and react would have been shorter and the decisions that I made would potentially be different. I believe that a dynamic risk assessment would have been a crucial aspect of the day to be confident if the session was viable to continue with.

Abstract Conceptualisation

Gathering information and facts to help you analyse the reflective process (Kolb, 1984). Extreme situations are very rare, and in them can create either a flight or fight response and can affect your thinking process and how you process it and be able to lead yourself or a

group through it (Dixon, 2009). I believe my thought process is quite different from most as I can regulate my stress levels with coping mechanisms (Cox, 1986), allowing me to have free reign on my critical thinking. Predicting when and where a flash flood will occur is not as easy as predicting more common types of weather (Gupta et. al., 2002), although we can't always predict we can look at the geography of the land. The weather before that day was very dry and did not have any rain for a week, the hills and slopes are also covered in trees. This leads to the soil being very dry. Dry soil does not absorb water quicker than damp soil, this could potentially lead to the water running on top of the surface instead of permeating into the ground (O'Geen, 2013). This leads to faster water coming from the hills adding to the risk factor of the situation that transpired. Group dynamic would have a very big impact of the cohesion of the group effecting everyone's moods and ability to process information (George, 1990), this process would lead to panic and unconscious reactions to fear. If the group dynamic was not collectively in tune with each other then the outcome of the situation would have been different.

Active Experimentation

Active experimentation concluding on the reflection and information gathering and putting it into practice (Kolb, 1984). After learning from my experience, I will be doing more to prepare for future situations, having a habit of checking the weather 2 days before the event and everyday from there to make sure nothing changes from the original weather statistics. I will be experimenting experience different types of stress to mitigate the effects it would have on different risk levels. Different situations I put myself through will allow me to have sufficient knowledge to lead activities in different weather conditions and allow me to carry on the activity. Working with different groups, with different abilities and with different objectives will allow me to experience the most varied emotional and cognitive ability of individuals, this will provide me with strategies to cope with those groups.

In conclusion i believe that Kolb's model is a crucial theory to implement into daily life. Kolb's model provides individuals and groups with distinctive areas you need to consider after an event either big or small within their lives, allowing improvement on skills and critical thinking. Kolb's model allows me to reflect in my own personal way, showing me that

it allows people to change their view of the theory to fit their own personal situations. My reflective process has opened my eye to the skills that I need to improve on.

Word count - 1365

References-

Reference list

- Cox, T. (1986), Stress, coping and problem solving. *Work & Stress*, 1(1), pp.5–14, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02678378708258476>.
- Dixon, D.P., et. al., (2016), Making Sense When It Matters Most: An Exploratory Study of Leadership In Extremis. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 24(3), pp.294–317, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051816679356>.
- Fenwick, T. (2001). Experiential Learning: A Theoretical Critique from Five Perspectives. Information Series No. 385.
- George, J.M. (1990), Personality, affect, and behavior in groups. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 75(2), pp.107–116, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.75.2.107>.
- Gupta, H.V., et. al., (2002). The challenge of predicting flash floods from thunderstorm rainfall. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A*, 360(1796), pp.1363–1371. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsta.2002.1015>.
- Kolb, D.A. (2014). *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*. 2nd ed. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Montz, B. and Gruntfest, E. (2002). Flash flood mitigation: recommendations for research and applications. *Global Environmental Change Part B: Environmental Hazards*, [online] 4(1), pp.15–22. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s1464-2867\(02\)00011-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/s1464-2867(02)00011-6).
- Moon, J. (2001), *LTSN Generic Centre PDP Working Paper 4 Reflection in Higher Education Learning*. Available at: <https://cdn-prod-pdfsimpli-wpcontent.azureedge.net/pdfseoforms/pdf-20180219t134432z-001/pdf/reflection-paper-template.pdf> [Accessed 23 Nov. 2023].
- O’Geen, A.T. (2013), *Soil Water Dynamics | Learn Science at Scitable*. Nature.com. Available at: <https://www.nature.com/scitable/knowledge/library/soil-water-dynamics-103089121/>.