



## **Experiential Learning-- “Grasping” and “Transforming” Experience**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*When a teacher delivers the content in an innovative style, it gets impact on students to understand the things in a better way which is cherry on the top for students. Now a days experiential and reflective teaching learning process is talk of the town among teachers and students. Specifically in health education, these kind of teaching skills have more advantages to teach skills in a proficient manner which ultimately results in patient safety and quality health care. It is a technique where teachers are exposing the students to an experience and then discussing what was the experience, how it has happened, why it happened and so on, by use of this technique facilitator is making the learners to reflect back on their actions to know the frame of mind behind those actions irrespective of right or wrong, so that in next experience the same mistakes can be prevented with logics. Facilitator can use this technique by various ways like case scenario discussions, simulation methodology, field postings, practical, project work, internships etc.*

**Keywords:** Innovative; Experiential learning; Reflective learning; Health education; facilitator.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Class room teaching is happening by various methods to engage students. In this era of advanced technology, it's a big challenge for teachers to bring students in class room as they have all contents and books at home also. Hence, it's a need of hour to make the class room teaching more engaging and innovative. This can be achieved only by involving the students in teaching learning activities directly or indirectly. One of the ingenious methods which can be applied is learning by doing or learning by experiencing and reflecting. That is known as experiential learning. Here student feel more involved and get hands on to learn more specifically.

#### **What is Experiential Learning?**

Experiential learning is one of the processes of learning where students are first exposed to experience the situation and then reflect back what happened, how it happened and what was in their mind while performing in particular situation. There have been many educationalists such as John Dewey, Carl Rogers, and David Kolb worked on concept of learning by doing or experiential learning. A qualitative research study has been conducted in year 2018, October by Sheng AY, Chu A, and co-authors. The web based experiential learning platform on students of medical data were collected by structured interviews from 13 medical students using an ethnographic approach. Result shows three key components related to the impact of perceived learning moment on student learning: (1) logging “learning moments” enhanced memorization, (2) learning improved through reflection and (3) spreading the knowledge and gained experiences in practice. There are various activities which can be discussed by experiential teaching learning style are hands-on trainings, Simulation scenarios, Coaching, Facilitation teaching, Internships, practical, Field visits, Undergraduate research, Studio activities, School camps, Excursion, mock drills, Classroom games, Case studies, Leadership activities for instance providing opportunity to students to be a dean or VC for a day to develop leadership skills in them and Creative activities in scientific exhibitions like here in our university we organise Synergy for students to showcase their projects. The impression of experiential learning first coined in education by great philosophers and educators John Dewey, Kurt Hahn, Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget. Then David A. Kolb, explored about the concept in more depth. Kolb describes experiential learning as “the most influential learning approach where knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.” The phenomenon helps to enhance performance, learning and development.

**Why Experiential Learning?**

Once I was posted in labor room during my under-graduation training, there was a patient of eclampsia throwing convulsions badly. Being a 4<sup>th</sup> year student, I was not much aware what to do in that situation to manage the patient. The labor room nurses and doctors on duty were managing the case with my help as well. One of the team members ordered me to diminish the light in room, uplift the side rails of bed and be along with patient to prevent her from fall. After few seconds, when convulsions ended, we started magnesium sulfate as loading dose followed by maintenance dose.

So, the purpose of telling this case here is that I still reflect back when I used to teach management of eclampsia to students because I experienced that and now it is embedded deep in my brain. Hence, it's an example of experiential learning and reflective learning.

Being in medical profession, it is really important for our students to learn through their errors in simulation sessions and then in debriefing reflect back on those errors and learn through them.

**Experiential Learning - How it works?**

The fundamental components of experiential learning are "Experience (Do)—Reflect --- Think ---Act".

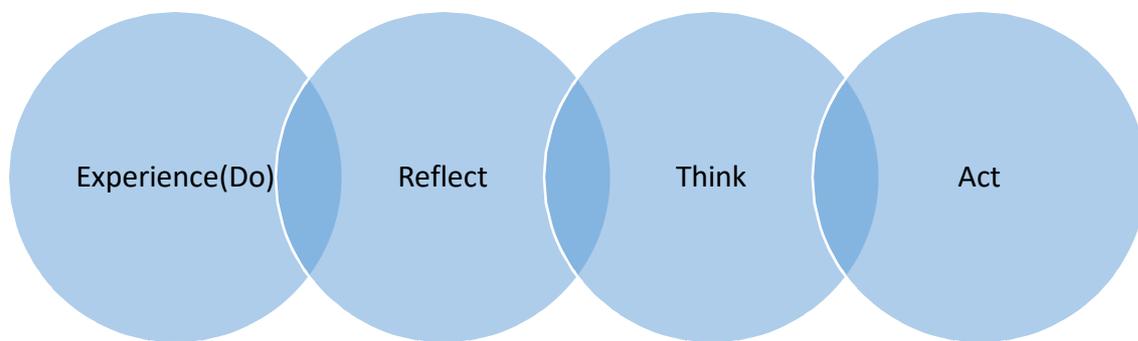


Fig 1: Flow Chart of Experimental Learning

As we previously talked, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory or Cycle (1984) explains experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge gain results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience."

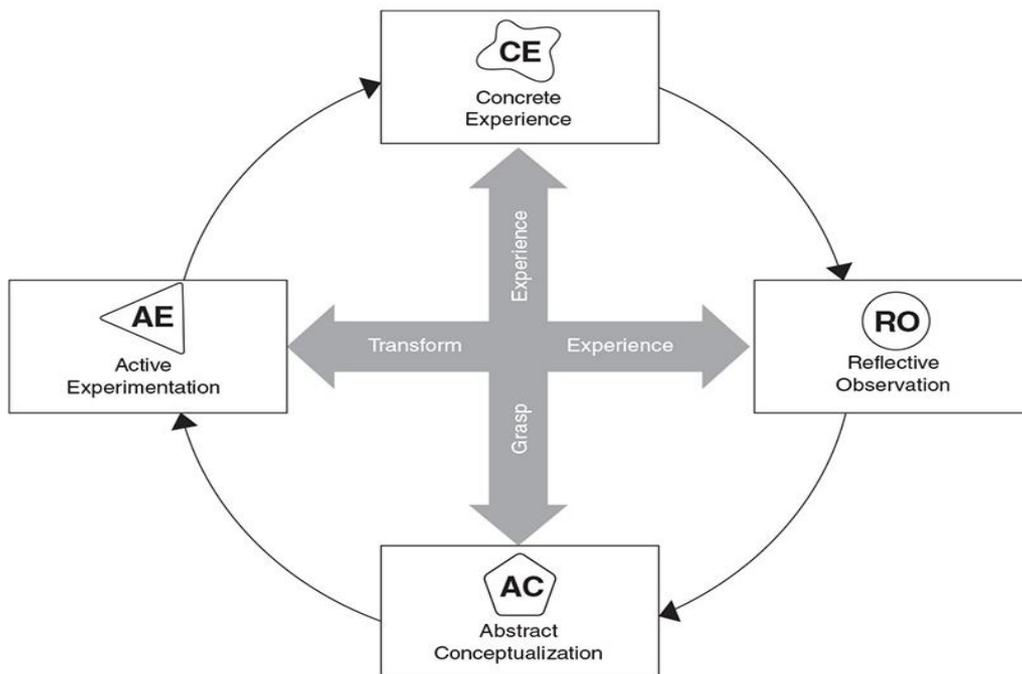


Fig 2: Kolb's Experiential Learning Cycle

Cycle describes a series of steps through learning by doing beyond class room teaching. The four components are as follow-

1. Concrete Experience
2. Reflective Observation
3. Abstract Conceptualization
4. Active Experimentation

Let's understand these four steps in detail-

1. Concrete Experience- it talks about when students are directly immersed in live situation or doing hands on. Hence, this step can be called as immersion, to support with an example, in a simulation scenario on management of cardiac arrest, students are trying to get response from patient, doing assessment and then started with cardio pulmonary resuscitation. So now they lived this situation, they experienced it so this is reason it can be described as immersion phase.
2. Reflective Observation- Next step after experiencing the situation is to reflect back about that situation and realise what has happened, how it happened and so on. Let's continue with cardiac arrest case management, where students have performed in simulation scenario and now, we are in discussion about the case management. Here if I ask my student why did you started chest compressions in scenario? At this point of time student will definitely go back in scenario and think when he provided the chest compressions to patient. So, his answer can be because patient was non responsive and there were no pulse and breathing so I performed chest compressions. Now he is reflecting back and learning why he did that particular step. During this phase we speculate about the experiences. We are reflecting that what went right and how we can improve if something went wrong? There is also an opportunity for the participants to learn how the things can be done differently and also the learning happened amongst the group. Uswahzulhasanah, Fitri Arofiati conducted a literature review on -The effect of reflective learning in nursing and health students published in Bali Medical Journal in 2021. Various data base was been used to gather such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, and Proquest. The findings talks are that reflective learning is very effective in improving some aspects in health and nursing students, where students learn through their experiences in clinics.
3. Abstract Conceptualization- third step in the learning cycle is to make sense of learning discussed in phase two. The student attempts to draw conclusions out of the experienced scenario and make concepts by using his previous knowledge and ideas with which they are familiar or by interacting with peers. Abstract conceptualization helps to generate concepts or theories. Going back to same case of cardiac arrest now student has understood that when any patient is non responsive, there are no vital signs present he needs to provide CPR which is an emergency lifesaving procedure.
4. Active Experimentation-this is the final phase of Kolb's cycle where student is applying the learnt behaviour in new experience. Basically, putting the knowledge into practice, as student has learnt about CPR when to provide and how to provide. Now he can provide this management to any patient in hospital any other setting.

Let's have a glance on another instance to conclude all four steps- **to learn how to ride a bicycle?**

Concrete experience – Trying to ride a bicycle without any previous knowledge and skill but not successful.

Reflective observation – Looking at another person riding bicycle.

Abstract conceptualization – Making a clear concept about theory of riding a bicycle.

Active experimentation -Now again sitting and riding the bicycle.

### **What is Critical Reflection in Experiential Learning?**

Experiential students are actively engaged into experience not only passively grab the information and translating that in meaning information by critically reflecting back. Although in reflection phase the learner is more actively involved mentally rather than physically as it's the time to interpret the grabbed information. So, in nutshell reflection is to think critically and analysing the experiential activity.

### **Gibb's Reflective Model**

Gibbs (1988) has given a reflective framework which we could be used by students during and after their experience. The model is very helpful in providing a structure to learner and educator how to get back to reflection. It actually helps you to look back, think, analyse what went well and what did not.

Model explains about 6 steps to carry on in reflection:

1. **Description** of what was the experience
2. **Feelings** emotions about the experience
3. **Evaluation** of experience, both good and bad
4. **Analysis** to make interpretations from experience
5. **Conclusion** of learning from experience how you have done and how it could be done differently

6. **Action plan** of new similar experience you are going to encounter in future. Basically, application of learnings from previous experience.



**Fig 3: Gibb's Reflective Model (1988)**

There is some sort of questions which can be asked in each stage to realise the learner what and how they have done.

**Description** – As name is suggesting here, we are describing the situation or experience. so the questions are such as –

- What happened?
- How it happened?
- Why it was so?
- Why you have done that?

**Feelings**—it is all about the emotional state you had in the experience. Such as –

- What were you feeling during the situation?
- Why you felt that way?
- What made you to feel so?
- How do you feel now?

**Evaluation**—These talks about what went right and what not? Basically, finding out or evaluating about negative and positive actions happened during situation. Questions can be asked as-

- What went well?
- What were positive and negative aspects of that actions?
- What did not go well?

**Analysis**—Here, interpretations have been done that why it has happened that way. How it is making sense. Guiding questions will be-

- Why things went well?
- Why things did not go well?
- What interpretations will you make?

**Conclusion**—this step talks about the extract or essence made by whole experience till now. The key points taken up after all above steps as summary. Questions can be such as-

- What have you learnt from today's session?
- How it could be more interesting and learning?

**Action Plan**—time to implement the learnt behaviour in similar new situation. Here student can make his own interpretations also based on previous learning. Questions to guide-

- If you have to repeat the same scenario again, what implications will you do?
- How it helpful to improve next time?

**CONCLUSION**

To conclude the article, there is a proverb if I hear something I may forget, if see, I try to remember and if I do I will understand the concept.

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