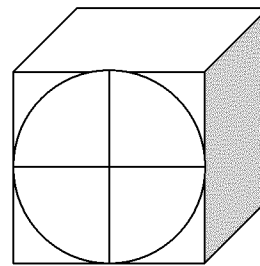


Integrating Experiential Learning into Traditional Training



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Integrating Experiential Learning into Traditional Training

Definitions: Traditional training is based on knowledge assembled and transferred from instructor to learner through slides or lecture. Instructor views the mind of the learner as a vessel to be filled.

Experiential learning is the process of *making meaning from first-hand experience*. The instructor's role shifts from deliver of knowledge to facilitator of active student learning. Instructor views the mind of the learner as a fire to be kindled.

Not all exercises equate to experiential learning

For example, the 'lecture' experiences students have in formal education settings. While the content of the course might have been 'physics' the experiential learning may have become "I hate physics". Preferably the student should have learned "I hate lectures".

Public speaking class in high school was a participative exercise. Without proper coaching and a positive learning environment, the experience may actually distort educational growth and disable an otherwise capable learner. Students become more "taut" than taught.

Integrating experiential training into traditional training

The three chief requirements to help students retain knowledge long-term and apply in the future are:

(1) *They must be strongly interested in it*

- a. Be presented with attention-gaining information
- b. Be asked questions bearing on a need, to show how the topic is important to their individual desires

(2) *They must understand it.* Information is best presented in a variety of formats to engage different learning styles. Rather than all lecture or text-laden slides consider using

IMPACT TOOLS like photographs; your own personal incident; having students share their personal incidents; anecdote stories (the telling of a tale to reveal a truth); props; games; competitive contest; analogies; case studies where they are asked to organize and evaluate complex information; student written textbooks and lesson plans; pertinent quotes; field outings; audience involvement through questioning; using volunteers to demonstrate; panels; skits; class projects; a planned demonstration; bringing a sample to class; making a hand-drawn illustration on a flip-chart; or showmanship (doing the ordinary in an in a surprisingly different way).

(3) *They must use it frequently* in their subsequent thinking, so they can model appropriate behaviors and procedures.

- a. Be given opportunities to apply knowledge in a real situation.
- b. Receive appropriate feedback and reinforcement

One of the best ways to have someone learn -- is to have them teach it. – Ken Bradford

WORKSHEET

Leaders are teachers. One knowledge area I am accountable for teaching to others whether formally or informally is:

They must be strongly interested in it

Techniques I could use to purposely call attention and gain interest in the subject are:

They must understand it

To appeal to a variety of learning styles, I could use the following Impact Tools:

They must use it frequently in the future

I can have students use the knowledge by creating opportunities like:

Additional materials on Experiential learning

from Neil A. Knobloch, Assistant Professor, University of Illinois

Pillars of Experiential Learning

1. Learning in real-life contexts
2. Learning by doing
3. Learning through projects
4. Learning by solving problems

Real-life contexts. Authentic learning occurs through tasks, activities, and assessments that result in achievement that is significant and meaningful rather than that which is trivial or useless. An authentic task has connection to the real-life problems and situations that students face outside of the classroom, both presently and in the future.

Learning to do by doing. Seaman A. Knapp is known as the “father” of Agricultural Extension Education. His philosophy, “what a man hears, he may doubt; what he sees, he may also doubt, but what he does, he cannot doubt.”

Learning through projects. The primary pursuit of project study is the “organization” of definite and coherent bodies of knowledge.

Learning by solving problems. William H. Lancelot, Professor of Vocational Education at Iowa State University believed that good teachers were the ones who “seemed to be alike in one respect ... they managed to keep before the minds of their pupils, either by direct questioning or by indirect suggestion, some problem or question to which the pupils wish to know the answer.” He defined a problem as “a question whose answer can be found only through thinking” and can be stated in words or created out of a situation. Lancelot’s criteria for good problems were: (1) clearly stated; (2) interesting; (3) an impetus for thinking of superior quality; (4) carefully adjusted to match the scope and difficulty for the students; (5) true to life; and (6) related to a specific teaching objective.

Four ways we learn from experience

From Understanding and Facilitating experience-based learning in adult education: the FOURthought model by John M. Dirkx and Ruth Lavin)

1. Trial and error. For example in preparation for a class, a teacher may use an exercise just to 'keep them busy', but finds that it really gets a point across, thus he includes it into the regular lesson plan.

2. Reflection. Like a mirror reflects information about ourselves, reflection is the ability of the learner to "step back" from the experience and reflect on its lesson for the present and future.

3. Creative expression, the telling of one's story. This orientation includes the use of narrative or the telling of one's story, craft, art, and music, as well as other forms of creative expression. The central premise of this view is that creative expression is a way for deeper part of the psychological self to communicate with its outer world and to help learners connect with and learn from significant aspects of their life experiences. Although it is intentional, creative expression is guided more by our emotional rather than our rational dimensions. Its manifestation is often symbolic and mythical, rather than logical and concrete. For example, one of the authors, in writing and developing the argument for this assertion, experienced a sense of "rightness" about the place and activity of his writing. Although engaged in a reflective and theoretical work, much of the activity involved creative use of ideas and literature. The sense of rightness that emerged reminded the author of what it is that is truly meaningful and worthwhile for him. This is an illustration of how creative expression helps us better understand ourselves and our worlds.

4. Discernment. Discernment views of experience-based learning emphasize experience as an interior phenomenon. Approaches to facilitating this form of learning help adults understand and discern the symbolic meaning that particular outer events hold for their inner lives. Like creative expression, discernment focuses primarily on emotional or affective aspects of our experiences. Unlike the reflective/rational approaches, the methods used to facilitate discernment de-emphasize the role of rationality and stress the significance of listening quietly and passively to a deeper source of knowledge within one's self. Popular manifestations of this approach are journaling of and dialoging with dreams and meditation.