



## Experiential Learning

Synopsis of selected authors, models and theories

November 14, 2003  
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## Five Perspectives - Tara Fenwick

**Review of the current perspectives** on experiential learning theory (2000)

**Five Classifications** of all Experiential Learning Theories

1. Reflection (Constructivist perspective)
2. Interference (Psychoanalytical perspective)
3. Participation (Situated Cognition perspective)
4. Resistance (Critical Cultural perspective)
5. Co-Emergence (Enactivist perspective)



### 1. Reflection (Constructivist)

**Above all, learning is individualized**

The learner has experiences, reflects on each one and, in turn, develops knowledge each time

Theorists who fit into this category include

- **Kolb** (1984)
- **Mezirow** (1990)
- **Boud and Miller** (1996)

Critics argue

- View is too simple
- Does not consider an individual's desire to learn, power structure of the learning environment, or the ability to learn without conscious effort



### 2. Interference (Psychoanalytic)

**Learning is derived from interactions in both the conscious and unconscious mind** as they wrestle to make sense of the individual's environment

Draws on the works of Freud and Jung

Theorists in this category include

- **Felman** (1987)
- **Britzman** (1998)

Critics argue

- Relies too heavily on internal factors
- Suggests learning is an entirely cerebral function without regard for socially constructed environments



### 3. Participation (Situative)

**Learning is derived through physical activities and tasks**

Individuals learn through participation and interaction with community, provided resources, and activities

Theorists who fit into this category include

- **Wilson** (1992)
- **Greeno** (1997)

Critics argue

- Too dependent on dependency
- Not all individuals have equal access to resources and opportunities
- Learning can occur conceptually, without the need for physical activity



### 4. Resistance (Cultural)

The **power structure of dominance** among teacher, learner, and environment significantly **impacts learning experiences**, cognitions, activities, identity, and meaning

Theorists in this category include

- **Kellner** (1995)
- **Flax** (1990)
- **Giroux** (1992)

Critics argue

- Individuals can be deeply embedded in and defined by their environment
- It is impossible to separate the individual from these environmental factors



### 5. Co-Emergence (Enactivist)

**Learning occurs through cognitive and sensory analysis**

Both the mind and the environment work in conjunction to foster learning

An individual's presence alone impacts his or her environment

Theorists in this category include

- **Davis and Sumara** (1997)
- **Maturana and Varela** (1987)
- **Mezirow** (1990)

Critics argue:

- Individuals can be deeply embedded in and defined by their environment
- It is impossible to separate the individual from these environmental factors



### Theorists

Dewey

Piaget

Lewin

Michelson



## Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin

### **Learning by Experience requires four abilities**

1. The willingness to involve oneself
2. To observe and reflect on a new experience
3. To create and integrate ideas and concepts from observation
4. To make decisions based on new ideas

Exemplified in the Lewinian/Kolb Model



## Dewey

### **Two Basic Principles of Learning**

#### **Continuity**

Learners accesses prior knowledge and then modify it for future experiences

#### **Interaction**

A transaction between an individual and a person or object in his or her environment

Jump to Dewey's model



## Michelson

### **Suggests that experiential learning is more properly understood as an act of re-membering**

Sees the history of epistemology as being predicated on a rejection of the body

Contends that this act of self-dismemberment denies the connectedness of knowledge to the body, losing sight of knowledge as a product of both



## Key Terms of Experiential Learning

Reflective Practice

Reflection-on-Action

Reflection-in-Action

Situated Cognition

Cognitive

Apprenticeship

Anchored Instruction



## Reflective Practice

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**Enables judgment, even in murky situations**

Based on 3 Assumptions

**Assumption 1**

- Those engaged in reflective practice are committed to problem finding and problem solving

**Assumption 2**

- An ethical dimension exists within reflective practice

**Assumption 3**

- Reflective practice does not require physical activity



## Reflective Practice

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**Judgments based on prior knowledge and experience**

Reflection-on-Action

- Thinking through a situation after the occurrence

Reflection-in-Action

- Thinking on your feet



## Situated Cognition

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**Cognitive Apprenticeship**

- Teaching learners different ways to think about what they learn

**Anchored Instruction**

- Within a formal educational setting, opportunities are provided for learners to engage in real-world problems that experts encounter



## Models of Experiential Learning

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Exemplify learning as a process in which concepts are derived from and continuously modified by experience

## Refined Learning Model

**Boud, Keogh and Walker**

The Three Stages of Refined Learning

1. Returning to an experience
2. Reflecting on feelings provoked by it
3. Re-evaluating the experience through
  - Association
  - Integration
  - Validation
  - Appropriation

## Autonomy-Adaptation & Expression-Application

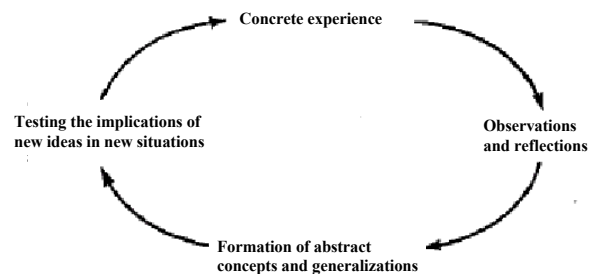
**Usher, Bryant, and Johnston**

Quadrants in their model include

1. **Lifestyle Practices**  
Achievement of autonomy through individuality
2. **Vocational Practices**  
Changing to adapt to socioeconomic environment
3. **Confessional Practices**  
Making private matters public; accepting responsibility
4. **Critical Practices**  
Changing practices rather than adapting to them

## Lewinian/Kolb Model

Action research and laboratory model focuses on concrete experience, cycle of goal-oriented action, and the evaluation of possible outcomes



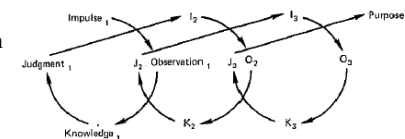
## Dewey's Model

**Impulses constantly stimulate new observations and new knowledge**

Similar to Lewin's model but Dewey contends that people continuously move through the learning cycle

Four Stage Model of Learning

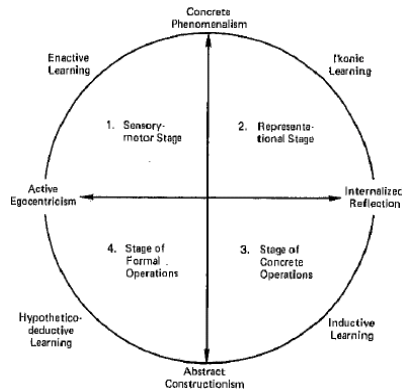
1. Impulse
2. Observation
3. Knowledge
4. Judgment



## Piaget's Model

Learners follow age-specific developmental stages

Learners transcend from a concrete phenomenal view of their environment to increasingly abstract views of the world



## Peter Jarvis (1987)

### Exploration of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

Negotiates the validity of Kolb's Model

- Jarvis hosted a workshop for adult educators to discuss their personal learning experiences
- Participants modified the Lewinian/Kolb model to be more reflective of their own learning experiences
- Developed their own comprehensive model

**This study serves as a springboard for our activity:**  
To develop an experiential learning model that represents the learning experiences of this class