

Mirror, mirror.....Using Reflection in Experiential Learning

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Why Reflect?

- Reflection helps us connect the act of doing with the act of learning
- Life happens fast, if we do not stop and think we could be missing out
- We already do this all the time when we connect present experiences with past experiences
- Reflection is part of the natural way we learn

What do you know, understand and can demonstrate?

An example that you can share

Something learned as a kid or adult

Could be academic or non-academic

Could be a professional skill or recreational skill

Now answer.....

- When did you first experience or observe what you now know, understand and can demonstrate (your example)?
- What piqued your interest or why did you care to learn more?
 - Was there a personal connection?
 - Was there some personal motivation?
 - Were you genuinely curious?

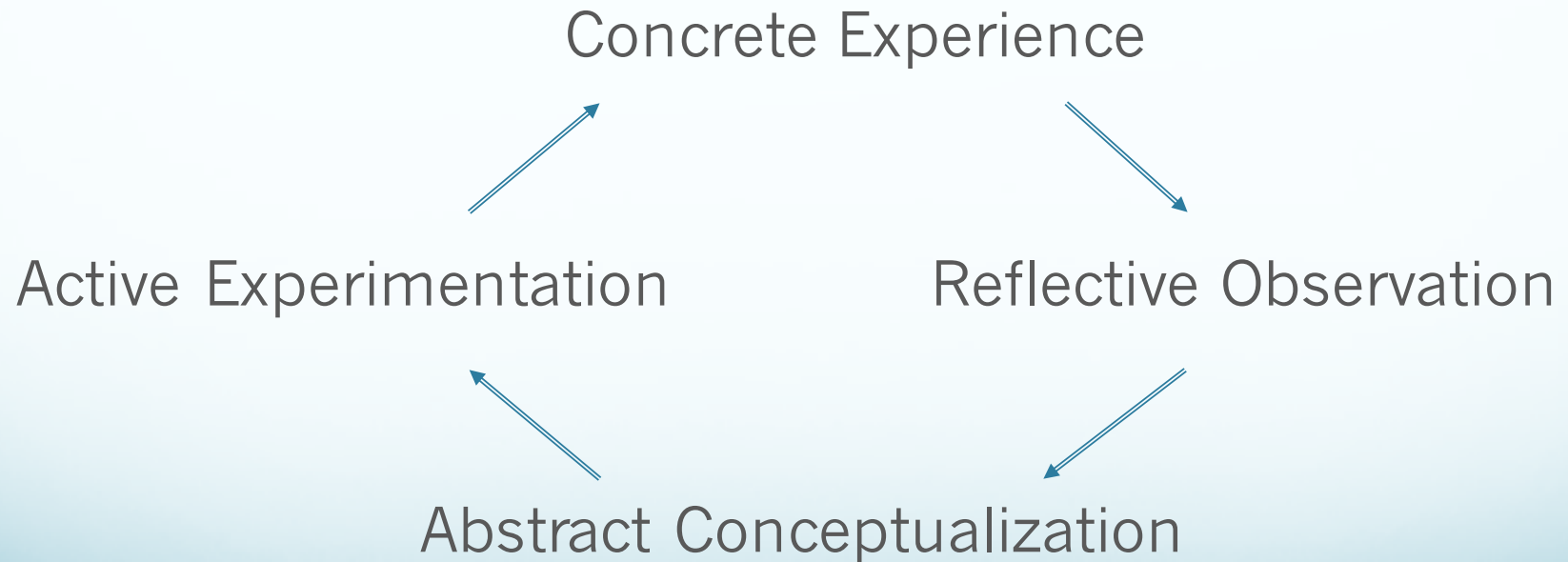
Now answer....

- After deciding that you cared to learn more... How did you gain new understanding or the new skill?

Did you?.....

- Connect what you initially observed or experienced with something you already recognized – draw on the familiar to make it familiar?
- Test out your new understanding or skill? (experiment, demonstrate, discuss, trial and error) Just to see if you are on the right track
- Expand your understanding or skill level through continued practice?
- Read about it, memorize information and recall when needed

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model (1984)



What is reflection?

In an academic setting.....

A person's intentional and systematic consideration of an experience, along with how that person and others are connected to that experience, framed in terms of particular course content and learning objectives (Dewey, 1933).

What is reflection

Critical Reflection.....

IS

Analytical and Rigorous
Carefully guided for critical thinking
About showcasing reasoning
Individual and collaborative –for sharing
A chance to learn how one thinks and
relates to course content
A process designed to generate, deepen,
document learning

IS NOT

Touchy-Feely
Just a flow of thought – diary
About personal opinions
To be done alone
Therapy
Busy work that is irrelevant to
learning

Ash, Clayton & Moses, (2009). *Learning Through Critical Reflection*.

Characteristics of successful reflection

- Eyler, Giles and Schmeide, 1996 identified characteristics behind successful reflection.
 - **Continuous**- reflection must take place before, during and after the experience to be fully useful
 - **Challenging**- effective reflection involves moving out of our comfort zones to make new connections between concepts and think in new ways
 - **Connected**- successful reflection can be the bridge between the experience and discipline based academic knowledge
 - **Contextualized**- effective reflection is framed in a manner that is appropriate for the context that the experience took place in

Reflection is also a great way to assess learning

- Reflection is a way to qualitatively assess student learning by gaging their depth of understanding in a richer or more nuanced manner
- Lots of learning is taking place, not just course specific content – this is good and can help you in your ability to tie into course material
- Learn about how they think, what interests them

Common practices for experiential learning

- Academic Service Learning
- Volunteering
- Role play/debate
- Case studies
- Study Abroad
- Research and Experimentation
- Capstone Projects
- Internships

Let's reflect....



Keys to effective reflection

- **Pre-flection** – take a snapshot of where they are before the experience
 - Current understandings, prejudices, predispositions, prior experiences, level of knowledge
 - Find out what their expectations are for the upcoming experience
 - Take notes and use as benchmark data for assessments later
 - Keep scope as wide as possible, you will drill down and help them connect to specific objectives later
 - Discuss in class

Keys to effective reflection

- **Reflect during the experience-** stop and think, get some feedback
 - Capture the moment while its still fresh
 - If they do not pause and reflect then the details that THEY perceive as unimportant may be lost (details that you may find to be incredibly important or relevant to course concepts)
 - This is your chance to make sure they are not missing the boat or make alterations on the fly – you put too much effort into arranging the experience not to
 - It may be helpful for you as the instructor to reflect and take note of what's happening as well

Keys to effective reflection

- **Post-reflection-** After the final experience
 - Connect back to course objectives
 - Talk about the experience, reflect as a group
 - Assess them on where they began (Pre-reflection) and now where they are (Post-reflection)
 - Pay special attention to individual the depth and detail of new understanding through their individual and unique experiences

Don't forget to reflect on your experience as well!

Reflection is about personal growth for you and your students – everyone will learn more about themselves, who they want to be and how they can become more responsible for their own personal growth

Guided questions

- Task Prompts for Different Levels in Steps for Better Thinking (Wolcott & Lynch, 2001)
 - Students come to us at different levels of cognitive ability – move from black and white to grey
- Establishing Academic Learning Objectives (Howard, 2001)
 - Generic Academic Learning, Learning how to learn, Community Learning, Inter- and Intra-personal learning

DEAL model

What are students *really* learning through reflection on their SL experiences?

Describe their experiences

Examine them from the perspective of each category of learning

Articulated

- What did I learn?

- Why is it important?

Learnings

- How did I learn it?

- What will I do now?



Assessable Language from Bloom's Taxonomy

<u>Bloom's</u>	<u>Asked of student</u>	<u>Learning-related behaviors</u>
Knowledge	Remember & recall	<u>Identify</u> , define, list, state, label
Comprehension	Demonstrate understanding	<u>Explain</u> , restate, summarize
Application	Apply knowledge to situations	<u>Apply</u> , use, solve, choose, predict
Analysis	Break ideas into parts	<u>Analyze</u> , compare, contrast, categorize
Synthesis	Put ideas together to create new	<u>Synthesize</u> , develop, propose, formulate
Evaluation	Make a judgment and defend it	<u>Evaluate</u> , assess, judge, recommend

Critical Reflection can bring transformative learning

- Critically thinking about specific experiences provides a new and more nuanced understanding
- A new and more nuanced understanding about anything can give your students a new/changed/altered perspective about any concept/phenomenon/population if they care
- Reflective writing and discussion will help students to figure out if and why they care – moment of introspection
- Transformative learning = enlightenment

In summary

- Reflection should occur before, during and after **experiences**
 - What do you think before - predisposition?
 - What is happening now - perception?
 - What will you do next - plan?
- Reflection should be prompted through guided questions in both discussions and written responses
- Reflection should be thought of as a vehicle for learning itself and as an assessment of learning

Thank You!

“Tell **me** and I forget, teach **me** and I may remember, involve **me** and I learn.” —
Benjamin Franklin