

Learning Theories

Different theories offer explanations about how learning takes place and how people learn:

- ▶ Experiential
- ▶ Constructivism
- ▶ Behaviourism and neo behaviourism
- ▶ Humanism
- ▶ Gestaltist
- ▶ Cognitivists

Experiential Learning

This is heavily dependent on the work of Lewin (1942), Kolb (1984) and Schon.

Kolb developed a much cited learning cycle which provides the most useful descriptive model of the adult learning process.



Learners show Understanding through;

1. Concrete experience of the situation
2. Observes and reflects on the experience
3. Forms abstracts about the experience
4. Tests new concepts

Think about what this means in practice- example giving an injection;

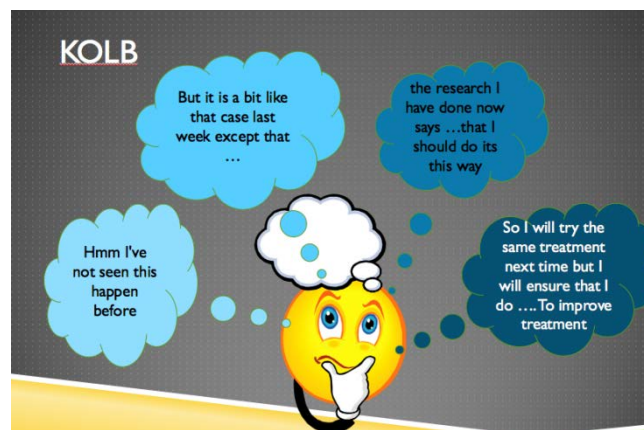
Concrete experience - student watches mentor give injection (Kolb talks about how you have to have a concrete experience to be able to 'hang' learning on, i.e. know what giving an injection is)

Reflective Observation - Student thinks about the experience, what it meant- why the injection was needed, why given in route it was, effects, techniques of mentor, was it a good or bad experience....?

Abstract conceptualisation - student further learns about experience, perhaps reads up BNF, drug chart, product information, perhaps talks through technique of drawing up injection with mentor- this bit is about the further information needed to support the learning.

Active Experimentation - this is when the student gets to 'have a go' and undertake an injection themselves under supervision, putting into place their previous learning and enhancing all of that by the 'doing'

Kolb identifies this as a cycle, it could be argued that we are constantly in this cycle for our learning.



Other theorists

Steinaker and Bell (1979)

Experiential learning, role of organising learning;

- ▶ Exposure
- ▶ Participation
- ▶ Identification
- ▶ Internalisation
- ▶ Dissemination

Exposure - developing a consciousness of experience. Could take form of seeing a procedure for first time, being involved in a discussion etc. Teacher role should be to facilitate, setting scene for learner, providing a tangible canvass.

Participation - student exploration. Does not imply competence, but teacher role is catalyst for the aim of competence, helps the learner expand on knowledge base, facilitates participation and provides feedback.

Identification - learner develops competence as further practice follows, subject matter reinforced. Teacher role is moderator, student utilises concepts and observes results of actions/learning. Further ramifications explored.

Internalisation - occurs when experience becomes part of learner's repartee and influences practice. Role of teacher is as sustainers, helping learner to consolidate knowledge, expand skills to more novel situations. Could include debate, discussion, simulation role play etc.

Dissemination - learner passing knowledge onto others. Role of teacher is that of critic to ensure quality (example Jamie Oliver- pass it on)