

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE (ELC) *

Before one begins to design a training session one should recall the basic principles of the experiential learning cycle. First, the application of each phase of the model is driven by the goals of the training session. Once the goals are defined, the session can be designed using the model as the framework. Second, theory can be inserted in two different places—either before the experience, in which case the experience becomes a way to test the theory or try out the skills implied by it— or after, when it is interwoven into the generalization phase as participants develop their own “theory”.

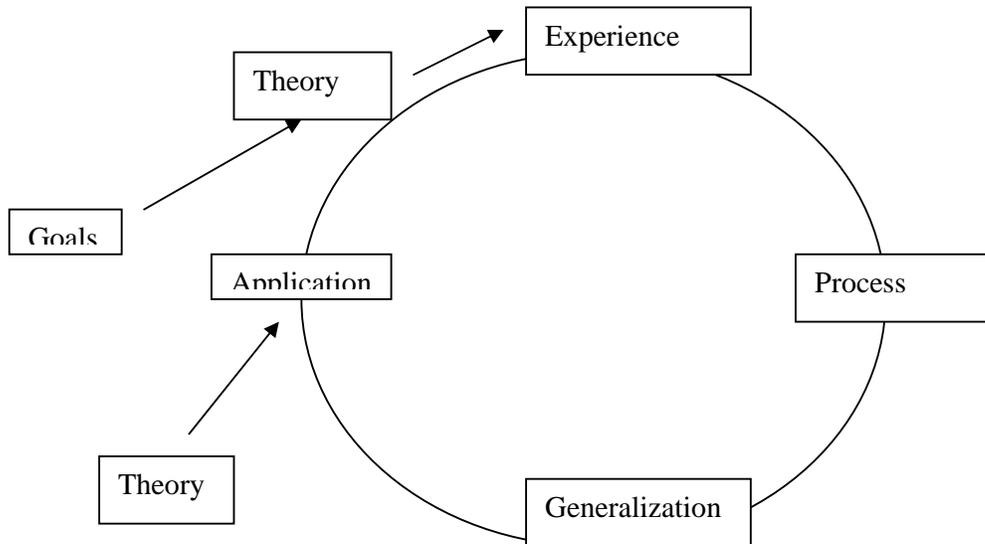


Fig. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

Often times the model is misused in practice where certain components are left out of the design or the programme. As a result, the power of experiential learning is significantly diminished or is negated altogether. However, when the seven components of ELC are applied rigorously in sequence, the potential for effective experiential learning can be dramatic.

In order to ensure a clear understanding of the experiential learning cycle, it is important to define the design component individually.

Climate Setting

- Stimulates interest, curiosity and enables the participants to begin thinking about the subject at hand.
- Provides rationale for why the subject is important to the participants and how it will be useful to them.
- Links this training session to previous ones and places it into the overall framework of the workshop.

Goal Clarification

- Presents statements to the participants which describe the intent, aim or purpose of the training activity.

- Provides an opportunity for participants to get a clear understanding of the goals of the session, and allows them to explore additional issues or raise concerns.

Experience

- An activity in which the group engages that will provide an opportunity for them to ‘experience’ a situation relevant to the goals of the training session.
- This ‘experience’ becomes data producing event from which participants can extract analyze as they complete the learning cycle.
- Common ‘experiences’ are role plays, case studies, self-diagnostic instruments, games, simulation etc.

Processing

- Participants share individual experiences and their reactions to the experience.
- The group analyses and thoughtfully reflects on the experience.
- The trainer guides and manages the processing of information.

Generalizing

- Participants determine how the patterns that evolved during the experience phase of the learning cycle relate to the experiences of everyday life.
- Participants seek to identify key generalizations that could be derived from the experience.

Applying

- Using the insights and conclusions gained from the previous steps, the participants identify and share how they plan to use these new insights in their everyday life.
- Participants answer the questions, “Now what?” and “How can I use what I learned?”

Closure

- The events of the training session are briefly summarized.
- Provides a link to the original **goals of the session** and seeks to determine if the goals have been met.
- Wrap up the **training session** and gives a sense of completion.
- Provides an opportunity to link the session to rest of the programme, especially the next training activity.

* Wilma J. Gormly and James A. McCaffery, **Design Components of an Experiential Training Session**, Training Resource Group. 1982