A Review of Experiential Learning as the "Educational Construct"

Patrick Sim Puay-I*

Student exchange programmes, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Abstract

This paper highlights the various conceptual understandings of learning in practice, the various terms of andragogy and their particular systems that will reflect great educational implications. It will include a discussion of some of these learning perspectives, focusing upon their theoretical and practical strengths and limitations within applied and experiential contexts. The following needs further consideration:

• Analysis of the learning perspectives.

• Key underpinning questions that need to frame an analysis and interrogation of the concepts and practices of learning that foreground experiences.

• Implications of the learning perspectives applied to my roles and practices.

It is important to realize the implications and contributions of the learning concepts and to forge a bigger interactive picture between knowledge and experience on current and future biological lives. This monograph focuses and examines experiential learning through different lens that attempts to fill any unfulfilled pedagogical gaps in my work area.

Keywords: Experiential learning; Constructivist; Critical cultural; Participation; Enactivism

Introduction

Learning discourses

In contemporary discourses, learning is viewed as central, and its perspectives claiming higher priority than others in terms of teaching effectiveness, competences and successful pedagogical outcomes. A constructivist learning model as stressed by Kolb [1] posited that reflection is about endearing to cognitive processes of analysis and understanding. He believed in reflecting observation upon concrete experience to produce some abstract conceptualization without unlocking the questions. However, Watkins and Marsick [2] showed how people's experiential learning is not always conscious and may simply reproduce beliefs of their surrounding contexts, very much a polluted instance of callous thoughts that did not undergo review. Consider a case of several school boys engaged in a free-for-all against a bully victim shows a lack of reflective thought prior to the action and to the consequences, and produced beliefs that their teachers will condone their behaviour which they inadvertently did. No school authoritarians involved themselves, as teenage fighting is embedded as a 'growing up' norm in that society.

As much value individual reflection can provide, the address towards solving ill-structured problems in the workplaces is severely limited due to repressed hierarchical and homogenous orders of sinecure type organisations. This experience has led me to question: Why do they all react without a conscience? Are they literally the same across the board? What is the foreseeable impact of the victim and society? Schön [3] stressed upon critical reflection upon framed problems. It is this constant refinement of the problems, or critique of the self that will emancipate one from a context and accelerate into another. Thus, reflection is the apperceptive process by which we change our minds, literally and figuratively [4]. For a global educator, sharing of such thoughts maybe repugnant, de-contextualised and illegitimised in a local scene, feeling in a state of helplessness. As Orner [5] and Tisdell [6] suggest, experience or reflection should not be laden to free people from their misconceptions, ideologies and false consciousness. Subjectively, it is the critique of things from it than in it.

The psychoanalytic theory involves the unknown and known spheres of activities within the self-conscious. It follows the epistemologies of split subjectivity, centrality of desire, and the significance of the unconscious and its resistance to knowledge in the learning process [7]. It is as if the unconscious is taking charge of learning with the impulses of desire or fear controlling the ego. Think of how the unconscious works with the following scenario set in a discursive context between an educator and learner:

A customer purchases a product and pays $3000 to an assistant who collects payment on behalf for the company. Contemporaneously, the company offers a rebate of $500. The assistant refunds the customer $300 and siphons $200. The customer has now spent $2700, and with the inclusion of the siphoned $200 becomes $2900 in total. Where now is the remaining $100?

The learner's inevitable response was one of shrugs and in search of the missing $100. While the unconscious mind was at work resisting or solving the mathematical equation, it did not address the keywords "spent" and "siphon" which were of different class elements and cannot be put together, so there was in fact no missing $100, but a different arrangement of context and words. The deeper an attitude towards an end objective it perceives, the lesser the tendency to reject a fixed question or answer, and an educator should free the unconscious mind, and not to associate any determinable where the learner is so split by concrete illusions sustained in the lingual register. The unconscious cannot be known directly, and its workings interfere with our intentions and our conscious perception of direct experience [8].

To contextualise the individuals' purposes, interpretation and

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*Corresponding author: Patrick Sim Puay-I, Nanyang Technological University, 50 Nanyang Avenue, Singapore 639798, Tel: +6567911744; E-mail: edulearner.sg@gmail.com

engagement with experience, there must also exist the relations between individuals, their communities and other dimensions within. Newcomers to a community of practice start learning through "legitimate peripheral participation" [9]. Learning becomes incremental and integration is a must to legitimising one's identity in the society. Knowledge gained by the individual is shared but not heralded, ascribed and not acquired. It is the communism of knowledge that enforces the value of ethos, meanings and symbols intersecting the individual and group.

Consider developing your musical skills through self-efficacy. That however cannot by itself, decide the goals of arts for the society. Sfard [2] points out that the participation metaphor invokes themes of togetherness, solidarity, and collaboration that could promote more positive risk taking and inquiry in learning environments. At the process level, society produces what learning should be internalised to prepare children for the future (no escape from national service obligations), even at an economical cost of punishing and losing the "talented". There is a danger that participation then becomes a "parade" erring to the herd-mentality. A question surmounts then: If the self is not to be revered, then should we defer the leader, or the mass? Learners should not unwittingly fall into a straggle of either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat if the meanings are unclear, thus leading to the critical cultural learning perspective of power issues.

As situated learning naturally adopts a participatory alignment with the environment, there is a lack of attention to power and its flow that so illustrates a critical cultural perspective. Fenwick [8] emphasises the need to analyse the structures of dominance that express or govern the social relationships and competing forms of communication and cultural practices within that system. Such emphasis touches on issues of hegemony and its creation of a dualistic system that prevents an override by any jumble of pieces, which may either lead to the dark, or act as balances of checks to hegemony.

It is akin to a group of directors saying, "Let's just have an authoritarian teacher or martial arts expert to keep those puffed-up students coming off the classrooms and to our offices. We are shutting down business discreetly." It coincides with Bourdieu's [10] theory of cultural capital to analyse certain mechanisms of control hidden or unrecognised and often complied with by the controlled subjects. The subject should resist certain functions and stress support mechanism with co-workers that share similar experiences of the struggles and act otherwise to prevent. Perhaps the most important knowledge is people learning that they could act and that their action can make a difference [8]. There seems to be an ineluctable urge for people to need transparency and a voice. But can learning be made transparent in the face of normalised or defoliated practices by others? How then can learning be harvested to create a more confident and "personalised" us.

Davis and Sumara [11] explain that instead, enactivism accepts the premise that "cognition exists in the interstices of a complex ecology or organismic relationality." It is the relationships that bind together in complex systems. Enactivism of experiential learning takes place in the complex system or environment and depends on it. The environment does not however depend on the enactivism of learning, since it is but one of many other forms of learning. The environment is noted as empty as the way it is, it needs to be filled with complex thoughts and learning accoutrements. It is only by adding or changing behavioural stimulus and knowledge constantly within the environment can learning take occurrence.

Consider elephants that are tied up forcibly with thick ropes since young have been conditioned not to struggle, escape being futile. Even as the ropes are thinned much later, they are not able to comprehend the change settings. Of course, elephants and men are different. Educators need to become alert to a "complexified awareness…of how one [individual] exists simultaneously in and across these levels, and of how part and whole co-emerge and co-specify one another" [11]. In a sense, enactivism may not promote the quality of binded relationships as events that unfold are fluid and often in a state of flux, akin to having different liquids poured in and out of the same glass. Nor does it question the automatic release of thought processes, relations of power or distance. Can the educator really present a rebel idea or practice to someone of a high political stature and hope that both interests will click? However it might be assumed that change is the main focus of enactivism, and that change is the all power actor that subsumes other elements including power itself. What can result is a spread of learning elitists that ensure non-monopoly of who owns what privilege knowledge.

Learning systems applied to the workplace

The theories of constructivism seem to resonate best with my teaching roles in my workplace context. This process of construction emphasizes on the creation of knowledge, which is critical in societies that take away everything meaningful. Constructivism is contingent to giving an active standpoint for my students to build their own knowledge rather than suction in from the external supplies. Meaning is not something that resides in our brain as a result of our conscious processing, but is created and re-created through being in and interacting with the world [12] Take for instance, "can the mind actually construct a car and create connections with other minds." Being hands-on is the most appropriate way in dealing with subjects like operational research methods, where much surveying, examining and discussing findings take place on-site in order to acquire useful knowledge. However, the problems faced by me with this method are: the inertia of discussions and exchanges as well as the delimitation of reference books and live sites. There is a tendency for data to not be represented as the truth, and knowledge earned is kept to oneself. These obstacles can reduce the purity of constructivism. The critical note is, "how can constructivist learning be more open and universally accepted."

The other unenviable learning perspective that enfolds upon my workplace context must be the critical resistance approach. It results from the notions of power relations and structure that have adverse effects on one's conscious over time. The constraints of a controlled informal setting as contrary to a formal one equates to a confused situation. Settings become too improper for learning to take effect as most teachers' identities or positions are not renewed. It seems at my learning place, there is a propensity to be removed from rather than face with various new learning methods or identities, simply because everything else has been taken away from you, or you simply did not put enough conscious lobbying efforts into sustaining a relationship with power-minded people. Discrimination of norms at my traditional workplace is unchallenged and evidently not apparent, except for women that are herald as the "champions" of taking on lower-class responsibilities. Giroux [13] has also explored this issue of reconciling transformed consciousness with the demands of surviving the real politics of everyday life. Nearer to class, the impositional subject presumes to determine what comprises false consciousness then undertakes to replace it with a particular conception of resistance, for example, has been problematized at length [14]. How often do principals under the false notions of saving costs, experiencing a variation and

blaming others of wastage, give students a quota of rationed electricity? This does not reflect any marked genuine intentions that other concepts can boast. The impacts resulting in dualism concepts of "have" or "have-nots", "should" or "should-not", are culturally embed and stream-dry any possibility of the individual transforming into a learned. This takes away liveliness and the rights to live with dignity [15].

Conclusion

This monograph has explicitly addressed the various views of learning, and that experiencing should revolve around eclecticism and opportunities. The needs of the situation rise above the dictates of policies, materialism, power or even standard beliefs, and that rational constructivism rather power concentration is a valuable learning tool that can translate the conscious out of the boundary. Being worthy of any concepts, one must engage primarily in the self through reflection and organize the knowledge needs of the situation. Therefore the phenomenon of "experiential learning" itself needs to be continually challenged to unravel the discursive meanings to include a better learning community for everyone.

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