

**Introducing an emotional experiential learning model based on a critical analysis of Experiential learning in Environmental and Outdoor Education and Experience Production.**

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Engagement and awareness of environmental issues are emerged by formal environmental education, media communication and from personal environmental experiences in leisure activities. Learning in environmental education has traditional been a cognitive communication of knowledge based on a scientifically objective epistemology leaving the constructive integration process and understanding the world to the student. This traditional “learning about” has recently been complimented by a “learning from” through experiential learning and outdoor education. The passive absorption of knowledge has shifted towards a more active immersion in the experiences of the world. The emergence of active experience production based on Pine and Gimore’s staged “Experience Realms” and new neuro-cognitive findings opens up for deeper understanding of the processes of learning through experiences.

Colb’s experiential learning is based on an active cognitive reflection process, “learning from” our actions and experiences. Using the metaphor of experiences and actions as a temporal process illustrated as a river, Colb’s experiential learning is based on of the process of stepping out of the river and from the beach active reflect on what happened in the river with the purpose to learn and become better prepared for further actions when re-entering the river of experiences. Colb’s experiential learning model is thus a “time-out” reflective process from the experience, and therefore not a true experiential learning, thus not a “learning in” the experience.

I here propose a model of “emotional experiential learning” based on neuro-cognitive processes such as unconscious learning and emotions as relevance detectors in the learning process. The learning occurs in the river of experiences generating a silent emotionally based unconscious knowledge. This model emphasis the importance of the materialistic component of the experience composed of the socio-spatial constitution of the experiential space and the subjective immaterialistic component of the experience. The model can be used both in environmental and outdoor education as well as in experience production in tourism and leisure. This silent emotional knowledge acquired unconsciously “in” and “through” the experiences may be a more powerful agency for environmental awareness and engagement then the traditional cognitively acquired communicative knowledge learned “about” the environment.