

Kolb's Learning Style Model

This model classifies students as having a preference for 1) *concrete experience* or *abstract conceptualization* (how they take information in), and 2) *active experimentation* or *reflective observation* (how they internalize information). The four types of learners in this classification scheme are

- *Type 1* (concrete, reflective). A characteristic question of this learning type is "Why?" Type 1 learners respond well to explanations of how course material relates to their experience, their interests, and their future careers. To be effective with Type 1 students, the instructor should function as a *motivator*.
- *Type 2* (abstract, reflective). A characteristic question of this learning type is "What?" Type 2 learners respond to information presented in an organized, logical fashion and benefit if they have time for reflection. To be effective, the instructor should function as an *expert*.
- *Type 3* (abstract, active). A characteristic question of this learning type is "How?" Type 3 learners respond to having opportunities to work actively on well-defined tasks and to learn by trial-and-error in an environment that allows them to fail safely. To be effective, the instructor should function as a *coach*, providing guided practice and feedback.
- *Type 4* (concrete, active). A characteristic question of this learning type is "What if?" Type 4 learners like applying course material in new situations to solve real problems. To be effective, the instructor should stay out of the way, maximizing opportunities for the students to discover things for themselves.

Traditional engineering instruction focuses almost exclusively on formal presentation of material (lecturing), a style comfortable for only Type 2 learners. To reach all types of learners, a professor should explain the relevance of each new topic (Type 1), present the basic information and methods associated with the topic (Type 2), provide opportunities for practice in the methods (Type 3), and encourage exploration of applications (Type 4). The term "teaching around the cycle" was originally coined to describe this instructional approach.

Kolb's Experimental Learning Model

Concrete experiences:

- Where did you work and for how long?
- What did you do?
- What were your responsibilities?
- What did you produce or effect did you have on the organization, institution, or their programs?

Reflective observations:

- What skills, knowledge, or competencies were you required or expected to have?
- How did you learn what was needed?
- In what ways did you grow or develop as a result of these concrete experiences? Be specific
- Who influenced your thinking and how?

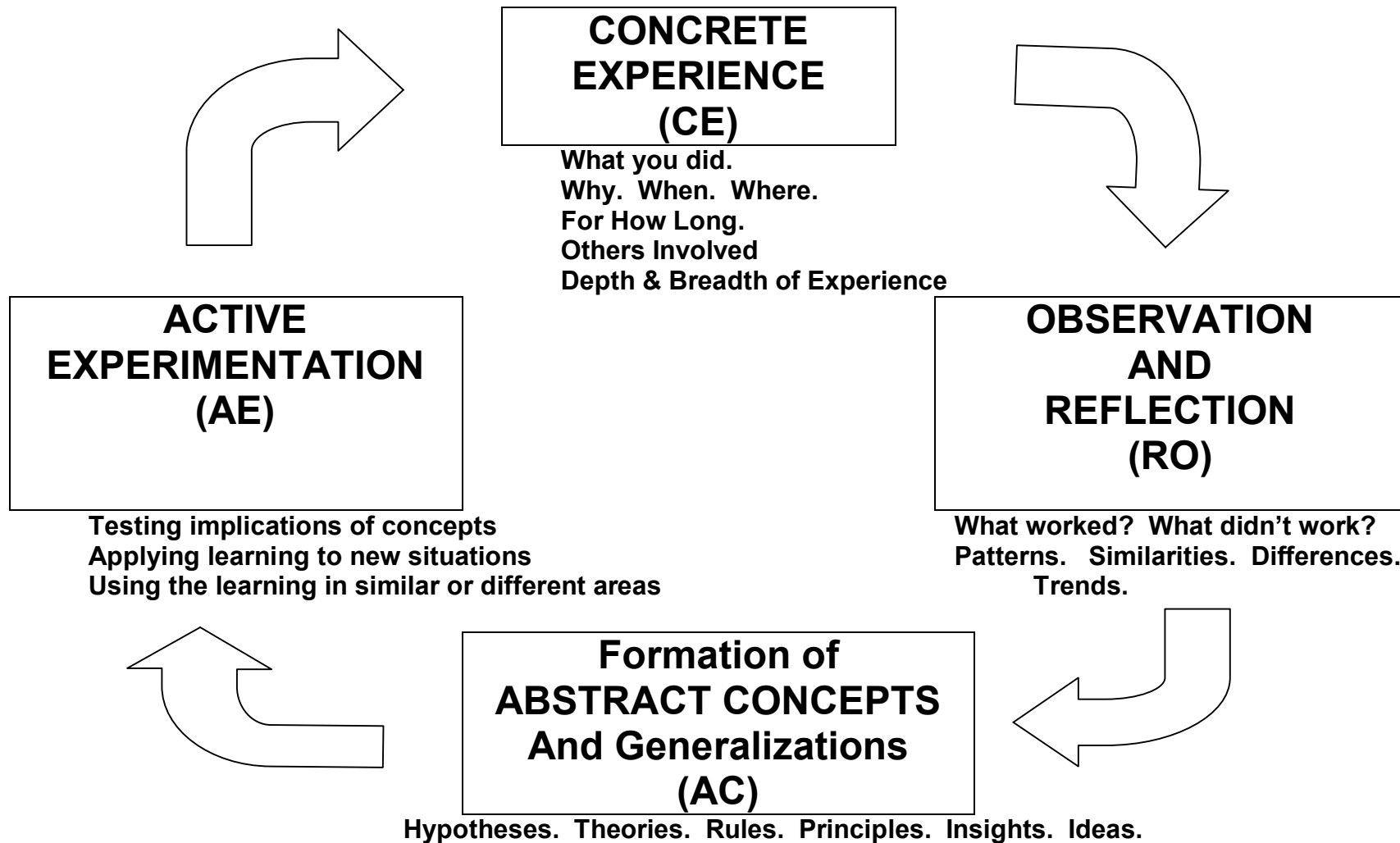
Abstract conceptualization:

- What conclusions did you reach as a result of your structured and supervised work experiences?
- What principles did you begin to embrace as critical?
- What theories, models, or paradigms began to emerge that could serve as a guide to your practice of work, or vocation?

Active experimentation:

- How did you apply your conclusions, principles, theories, or paradigms in concrete situations?
- What proof or evidence can you site that supports your newly formed concepts or generalizations?
- What changes were made in the way you conduct your ministry or vocation?
- What reconsiderations did you make and in what new ways was your understanding transformed or altered?

DESCRIPTION OF THE LEARNING CYCLE



D.A. Kolb and R. Fry, "Toward an Applied theory of Experiential Learning," *Theories of Group Processes*, Ed. Cary Cooper. John Wiley and Sons, 1975. (Adapted from Assessment Center for Prior Learning, Spring Arbor (MI) College.