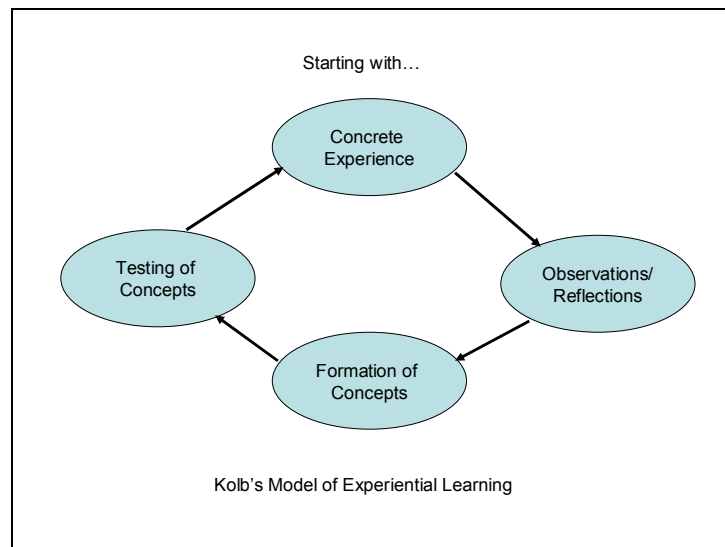


Learning Methods

One of the most important and useful gifts a manager can give their staff is the permission to learn. Organisations whose people do not learn face at best, stagnation, and at worst, obsolescence. If we remember the Vital Signs mantra that all positive change starts with me, it is worth bearing in mind that if you manage your own learning in a positive and professional way, your staff are more likely to see that as a good idea for them.

Most of us, in our prior management development, will have come across Kolb's learning cycle. Its simplified version is given here.



Whilst Kolb argues that all learning involves all parts of the cycle, more recent writers (Honey and Mumford) have suggested that people differ as to where in the cycle their 'best' learning is obtained. They argue that

- Some people learn best when there are lots of opportunities for jumping in and getting stuck in, where the physical and emotional experience of an activity stimulates the learning as much as the subject matter (they are called **ACTIVISTS**)

Whilst

- Some people learn best when sitting back and either watching others at work or reflecting on what has just happened to themselves (**REFLECTORS**)

Whilst

- Some people learn best when exploring theories, models, and concepts that help explain a past experience or provide meaning for what is going on around them (**THEORISTS**)

Whilst

- Some people learn best when planning how they are going to do something, by marshalling their thoughts and getting organised (**PRAGMATISTS**)

Whether you prefer the cyclical nature of Kolb's model or the preference based approach of Honey and Mumford, the important thing to bear in mind is that different learning methods will access different parts of the learning process. This in turn calls for breadth and creativity in your choice of learning events.

The following alphabetical list is designed to stimulate your thinking, and is not a definitive set of learning approaches. You are invited to consider which could be used by you and your different staff to develop your service, develop your skills and further develop your capacity for learning. By all means add to the list from your own experiences.

Academic study (MBA/MSc/Dip etc)

Action learning

Away Days/Time Outs

Becoming a tutor/trainer

Coaching

Conferences

Consultancy projects (real not artificial)

Courses/study days

Dummy runs/trials/pilots

Interviewing key staff

Literature reviews

Mentoring

PDSA

Reading

Research

Sabbaticals

Secondments

Shadowing

Supervision

Visiting Speakers for your team

Visits (inside and outside the NHS)

Writing articles (either research or commentary based)