

“Students don’t know they learned it, but I know they learned it...”:

Pre-service teachers’ experiences and perceptions of debriefing when teaching

Michelle Dillon, Deborah Tannehill, Mary O’ Sullivan, University of Limerick, Ireland

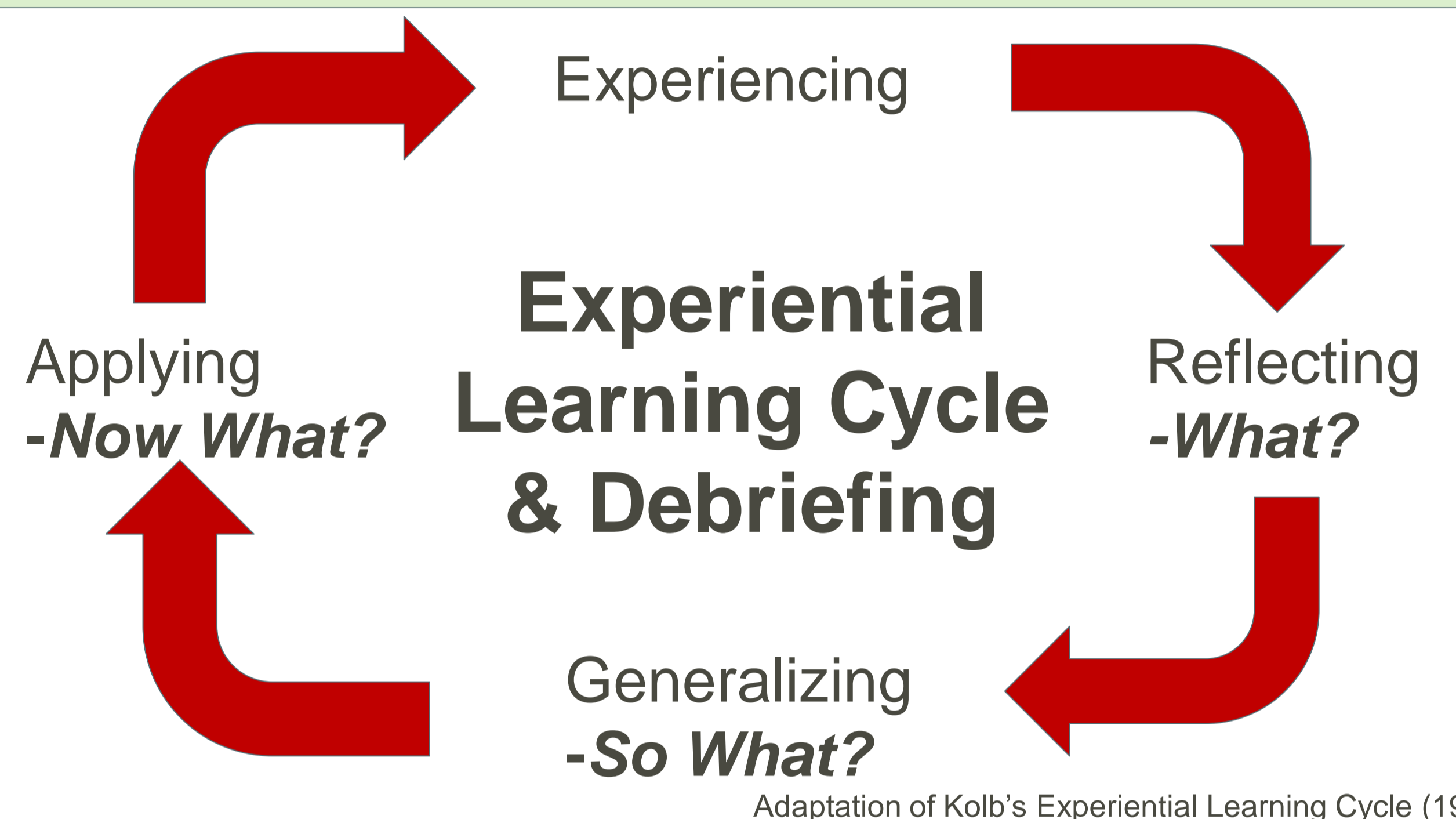
contact: michelle.dillon@ul.ie

Research Questions & Preliminary Findings

Research Question	RQ.1 Are pre-service teachers’ understandings of the experiential learning cycle and debriefing in line with what they learned during teacher education?	RQ.2 What planning and teaching approaches do pre-service teachers take towards facilitating debriefing?	RQ.3 What are pre-service teachers’ experiences of integrating debriefing?
Findings	Pre-service teachers’ understandings of the experiential learning cycle (ELC) were somewhat aligned to what they learned during teacher education. This knowledge however did not consciously influence their planning and teaching decisions yet was integrated into their planning and teaching.	Pre-service teachers’ included debriefings in lessons to understand student learning rather than as a means of supporting student learning. The content of debriefs was influenced by the immediacy of student behaviour and not always aligned with lesson objectives. Planning for debriefs included the first two debrief stages, ‘what’ and ‘so what’.	Pre-service teachers’ found students often gave ‘buzz word replies’ and were skilled at providing answers they thought the teachers wanted to hear. They struggled with getting honest answers from students. At times the pre-service teachers gave up on debriefs due to lack of student interest. Debriefs planned for lesson closures often were omitted due to time constraints.

Introduction

The context and interactions in which learning takes place is said to be fundamental to what is learned (Putnam & Borko, 2010). Recent teacher education approaches to understand the relationship between theory and practice for pre-service teachers include experiential educative approaches (Korthagen, 2001; Oslin, Collier & Mitchell, 2001). Experiential learning encapsulates guided reflection (debriefing) as a means of supporting learning through experience, with Kolb’s experiential learning cycle (1984) being a dominant model. This study aims at gaining understandings of physical education pre-service teachers’ facilitation of an experiential learning environment having learned the outdoor adventure education curriculum model, content and pedagogy through an experiential learning approach. This poster presents findings relating to the pre-service teachers’ experiences and perspectives of facilitating debriefs when teaching outdoor adventure education of which experiential learning is central.



Methods

Participants	Twenty eight physical education pre-service teachers, studying for a 4 year teacher education programme in Ireland volunteered to be part of the study. Eleven participated in the main phase, with eight continuing participation in phase II. Data were collected during 2 nd year (6 weeks, Main Phase) and 4 th year (10 weeks, Phase II) teaching practice placements. Findings from the main phase are presented today.	
Data Collection	MAIN PHASE	PHASE II
Pre-Teaching Practice	-Planning Meeting Observations & Discussions -Schemes of Work & 1 st Lesson Plan	-Individual Pre Teaching Practice Discussions -Schemes of Work & 1 st Lesson Plan
Mid-Teaching Practice	- Lesson Plans collected (2 days pre- outdoor adventure lesson delivery) - Pre Lesson Discussions (pre-outdoor adventure lesson delivery) - Lesson Observations - Post Lesson Discussions - Post Lesson Appraisal's & Weekly Observations collected	- Lesson Plans collected (2 days pre- outdoor adventure lesson delivery) - Pre Lesson Discussion (pre-outdoor adventure lesson delivery) - Lesson Observations - Post Lesson Discussions - Post Lesson Appraisal's & Weekly Observations collected
Post-Teaching Practice	-Focus Group Interview	-Individual Interview
Data Analysis	All interviews were transcribed. Data were inductively analysed with themes and patterns continuously sought. Triangulation was used as a means of understanding and aligning the data. The themes and patterns that emerged through the data were compared and contrasted through cross case analysis.	

Discussion & Conclusion

- Pre-service teachers’ planned for and attempted to integrate debriefing when teaching their outdoor adventure education lessons. As all but one of the eleven pre-service teachers had no previous experience of outdoor adventure education previously suggests teacher education as the primary influence.
- Pre-service teachers’ understandings of the experiential learning cycle somewhat aligned with what they were taught and experienced during teacher education, however these understandings did not always translate in to their teaching.
- With only the ‘what’ and ‘so what’ stages of debriefing being catered for the post-primary students were not provided with the opportunity to apply new knowledge learned and so it would appear they were not given the chance through debriefs to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning, a key principle of outdoor adventure education (Priest and Gass, 2005).
- Although outdoor adventure education is one of the seven strands of the Junior Cycle Physical Education (JCPE, 2003) curriculum not all schools visited by pre-service teachers incorporated this strand, leaving the pre-service teachers at times with little support in teaching this content and through this approach. In considering this:
 - What expectations are realistic for pre-service teachers at this stage of their career?
 - Is it reasonable to expect pre-service teachers to facilitate an enquiry based classroom?
 - How can teacher educators support pre-service teachers who have little experience of content and little support from co-operating teachers?

References

- JCPE (2003). *Junior Cycle Physical Education Teacher Guidelines*. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984). *Experiential learning*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Korthagen, F. 2001. *Linking Practice and Theory: The Pedagogy of Realistic Teacher Education*. Paper presented AERA
- Oslin, J., Collier, C & Mitchell, S. 2001. *Living the Curriculum*. Journal of Physical Education, Recreation and Dance. 72. (5): pp.47-51
- Priest, S., and Gass, M. 2005. *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming*. Human Kinetics. Champaign, IL.
- Putnam, R. & Borko, H. 2000. *What Do New Views of Knowledge and Thinking Have to Say About Research on Teacher Learning?* Educational Researcher. 29. (4)