Facilitating learning: mine, yours and others’ :gaining insight into the facilitation of corporate experiential learning programs through the lenses of personal experience and the learning styles analysis

Tracey Joy Dickson
University of Wollongong
NOTE

This online version of the thesis may have different page formatting and pagination from the paper copy held in the University of Wollongong Library.

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

COPYRIGHT WARNING

You may print or download ONE copy of this document for the purpose of your own research or study. The University does not authorise you to copy, communicate or otherwise make available electronically to any other person any copyright material contained on this site. You are reminded of the following:

Copyright owners are entitled to take legal action against persons who infringe their copyright. A reproduction of material that is protected by copyright may be a copyright infringement. A court may impose penalties and award damages in relation to offences and infringements relating to copyright material. Higher penalties may apply, and higher damages may be awarded, for offences and infringements involving the conversion of material into digital or electronic form.
Chapter 3. Immersing in the Literature

3.1. Introduction

In reviewing the literature relevant to this topic, the intent is to cover a wide range of sources from several perspectives. These perspectives include education (e.g. Dewey, 1938/1976; Giroux, 1983; Sims and Sims, 1995), psychology (e.g. Bokoros, Goldstein and Sweeney, 1992; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Henry, 1999; Heron, 1992), therapy (e.g. Gass, 1991; Handley, 1990; Itin, 2000; Schoel et al., 1988), experiential learning (e.g. Bacon, 1987; Bell, 1993; Boud, 1989; Hahn, 1957) and philosophy (e.g. Giroux, 1983; Serres, 1991; Warren, 2000). As a component of the second stage of the heuristic research process, this literature review is possibly more extensive than may be considered the norm for a thesis due to the desire and the need to not just review the literature but to ‘immerse’ myself in the topic, both at the theoretical level and, later through the autoethnography in Chapter 4, at the personal level.

The review of literature is organised in two sections. The first section is a more traditional literature review that covers some of the history and terms used in the experiential literature with a particular focus on literature related to facilitation and reflection. The breadth of literature is further bounded by the intent to focus more upon literature from North America particularly in the period from the mid 1980s to more contemporary material. The main reason for focusing upon this period is because it is this literature that has sparked my research interests and thus my experiences as acknowledged in the autoethnography. To ensure that the context of the literature connects with corporate training and human resource development, reference is also made to relevant sources in the fields. The four broad topics covered in this literature review are:

- Experiential Learning: What Is It?
- Corporate Experiential Learning Programs
- Effectiveness of Corporate Experiential Learning Programs
- Learning Styles
These order of these topics seek to define the broad terms used within the research and then to narrow the focus to corporate programs, and then in particular learning styles as distinct from any other instrumentation or model.

The second literature review, in Chapter 6, in line with a postmodern theoretical perspective, draws upon more eclectic approaches and builds upon the heuristic research process’s endeavours to draw knowledge from a wide range of sources. In this case the literature will include human geography and organisational aesthetics. Popular images conveyed in the experiential literature and a deconstruction of a popular model of facilitation, that of the five generations of facilitation (Priest and Gass, 1993) aim to explore assumptions that may exist and to build upon the emerging themes of my autoethnography.

3.2. Experiential Learning: What Is It?

One of the long-standing challenges facing writers, readers and researchers in experiential learning is the need to clearly define the field. Moon (1999) and Beard and Wilson (2002) both discuss the lack of consistency of meaning of ‘experiential learning’ that exists within the literature of professional development. The need for definition is also highlighted by the many instances where issues raised by Dewey in the 1930’s, the first educational philosopher to write on experience based learning, remain unresolved over sixty years later (e.g. Bell, 1993; Michelson, 1996; Wilson and Burket, 1989). A choice exists whether to maintain a broad definition, or to clearly establish the boundaries in which experiential learning operates in what may be a distinct and unique way. A loose definition may lead to loss of distinctiveness. Clear boundaries may exclude current stakeholders who may disagree with the boundaries. The definitions proffered reflect the plethora of perspectives, assumptions and beliefs that are held by experiential practitioners and theorists. An assumption is made here that for clarity of purpose it is important to carefully define experiential learning in order to establish a clear focus for the task ahead.

Weil and McGill (1989), in an effort to make sense of experiential learning, identified at least four ‘villages’ or interpretations where the role of experiential learning is emphasised.
The four villages are:

- The assessment and accreditation of learning from life and work experience;
- A means of bringing about changes in the structures, purposes and curricula of post-school education;
- A basis for group consciousness raising, community action and social change;
- A means for increasing self awareness and group effectiveness (Weil and McGill, 1989).

Within these villages and beyond the available definitions of experiential learning range from the simple, with emphasis upon the activity or experience, to the more complex, where it is suggested that experiential learning is more than the activity. In the latter end of the spectrum an integral component of any experiential learning event is the processing of, or reflection upon, the experience to draw out the meaning and the significance of the learning opportunity. To address the question of what is experiential learning the following topics will be considered:

- Training, Development, Education and Learning: What’s the difference?
- How Do You Know When You Have Had An ‘Experience’?
- Evolving Understanding of ‘the Experience
- Involving the Whole Self, But What About Everyone Else?
- Reflection Upon the Experience
- Application of the Experience

3.2.1. Training, Development, Education and Learning: What’s the difference?

Prior to examining the meaning of experiential learning within the context of corporate training and development it is worthwhile to briefly consider the meanings
and differences, where they exist, between key terms such as training, development, education and learning.

a. Training, Development, Education and Learning

Garavan, looking from within a human resource development or management context (HRD or HRM), considers this question and reaches the conclusion that “training, development and education are essentially concerned with learning” (Garavan, 1997:41). With respect to training and development, Garavan (1997) concurs with Smith who says that:

... training is most commonly associated with the development of job-related skills; education suggests a much broader activity based on the 'holistic' development of individuals; and development implies growth in a non-organisational context as well as in the workplace (Smith, 1998,1)

This places the emphasis of training upon the achievement, in the short term of specific skills and abilities that are relevant to the current work situation, while development is often focused upon future job needs.

In comparison to training and development, education is a much broader term and usually relates to more general skills and knowledge rather than specific vocational outcomes as may be expected in training and development (Garavan, 1997), while for Michelson, experience is the input and learning is the outcome (Michelson, 1996).

b. Experiential Education and Experiential Learning

An initial challenge that presents itself before a definition can be sought is to address the meanings of two terms that are often used interchangeably: experiential education and experiential learning. Throughout this thesis I deliberately refer to experiential learning as distinct from experiential education. From a personal perspective, placing the emphasis upon learning can highlight the role of the learner and the applicability of the learning, whereas education may place more emphasis on the educator and the broader outcome of education for life.

At the less complex end of the definition continuum are Galagan and Bacon who variously define experiential learning as "to learn by doing" (Galagan, 1987a:40), or as Bacon proposes that "(e)xperiential education differs from traditional education in
that the student learns material by actually practicing it instead of simply talking or reading about it. This alone is not especially revolutionary” (Bacon, 1983:1).

What then constitutes experiential learning? To determine if an event is experiential learning it is important to consider the essence of the experience.

3.2.2. How Do You Know When You Have Had An ‘Experience’?

The origins of modern day experiential theory has been strongly influenced by the progressive educationalist John Dewey (1938) who, in seeking to define a distinctive field of education that involved experience, identified that in its broadest sense experiential learning may include anything that involves some form of experience. This experience may include sitting in a classroom or reading a book in the library (Dewey, 1938/1976:25). For the dedicated outdoor or adventure-based facilitator the concept of reading a book as an example of experiential learning may be an anathema. However, for Dewey the experience itself is not enough, it is the quality of the experience and its contribution and connection to future learning experiences that determines its value: “education based upon experience is to select the kind of present experiences that live fruitfully in subsequent experiences” (Dewey, 1938/1976:28). Experiences that do not contribute to future learning are considered mis-educative. The notion of one experience leading to future experiences has some resonance with Hahn, a Jewish man who escaped the crimes of Nazi Germany, who presented the following as underlying his convictions for schools such as Gordonstoun and Outward Bound:

It is the sin of the soul to force young people into opinions – indoctrination is of the devil – but it is culpable neglect not to impel young people into experiences (Hahn, 1965:2)

Priest (1995) seeks to distinguish between experiential versus classroom based organisational team building, by grouping initiatives and outdoor pursuits under the experiential banner and lectures and simulations under the classroom banner (Priest, 1995c). This contrasts with Caine and Caine’s perspective, and with Dewey’s view expressed above, that “we are all immersed in complex, global experiences every moment of our lives” (Caine and Caine, 1994:112). All living and learning may be
considered experiential, what is important is how each of these experiences are used if it is to lead to learning within education.

Boud (1989) also focuses upon the actual experience, but from a more complex perspective when recalling work with Pascoe in 1978 when they proposed a theoretical three-dimensional model which may be used to “measure” the extent to which a program may be considered experiential (Figure 3-1). The dimensions are:

- degree of learner involvement
- degree of learner control
- degree of correspondence of the learning environment to the real environment

The model theorises that significant characteristics of any of these dimensions would legitimise the program being entitled experiential (Boud, 1989:38). This model may help to address Dewey’s dilemma, discussed previously, that everything may be considered experiential, however in Boud and Pascoe’s model (1978) what is considered ‘significant’ is not clearly explored.

In contrast to Figure 3-1, where there appears to be an underlying assumption that a group of people may have similar experiences, Bell (1993), from a feminist
perspective, raises questions about the generalisability of taken-for-granted definitions and theories as presented in much of the literature, as discussed so far. Two areas that Bell suggests have not been adequately addressed in the accepted theories are "the embodied location of experience and the social organization of the process" (Bell, 1993:19). In critiquing the dominant theories Bell questions the concept of the concrete experience, emphasising the individuality of experiences, the reality that no two people will experience the same situation in the same way given that each person has a different mix of history, life, education and relationships. For Bell, the embodied nature of experience is denied by the privileging of abstract thinking, logical thinking and memory work as evidenced in models such as Kolb's experiential learning cycle. This is explored further by Michelson when discussing the masculine narratives that traditionally promote the dualisms of: authority and experience; abstract and concrete; universal and partial, which all may be classified under the classic dualism: men and women (Michelson, 1996).

3.2.3. Evolving Understanding of 'the Experience'

An 'experience', as explored above, may occur in various places, whether that be the wilderness, the outdoors and even indoors. As discussed later in 3.2.7, Outward Bound programs have been identified as a key step along the way in the development of experiential learning programs. In 1941 the first Outward Bound School was established in Aberdovey, Wales building upon the work of Kurt Hahn and with the funding of the Blue Funnel Line, a merchant shipping company (Hogan, 1968). This was, in part, in response to the high level of deaths of young merchant seamen following the sinking of their ships during World War II, but also due to the success of previous programs, developed following the philosophy of Hahn, such as the Moray and Country Badge schemes (Hahn, 1957; Hogan, 1968; James, 1990). In the merchant shipping industry, contrary to popular expectation, it was the older, and possibly less fit, seamen who were surviving when their ships were sunk, not the young and fit seamen. This was put down to the benefit of a lifetime of experience in giving the seamen the inner strength and resources to live. The basic purpose of the Outward Bound course, which involved small and large boat sailing, athletics training and an expedition (Hogan, 1968) was to "encourage the individual to discover his or her inner resources" (Cole, 1987:281). From the United Kingdom, Outward Bound
grew internationally and was established in Australia in 1956 and in North America in 1962 (Smolowe, Butler, Murray and Smolowe, 1999; Zelinski and Shaeffer, 1991). While Outward Bound today may be synonymous with the wilderness, the actual origins of 'the model' was in fact a centre-based program where the program was delivered primarily from a built centre that may include buildings for accommodation, meals and activities.

a. From Wilderness to Adventure

The Outward Bound ‘model’ has been adopted and adapted by a number of organisations, for example Project Adventure which was established in Hamilton, Massachusetts, U.S.A. in 1971 with the objective of working within the confines of a school (as Kurt Hahn had with Schloss Salem in Germany and Gordonstoun and the Badge schemes in the United Kingdom). Project Adventure (PA) sought to achieve Outward Bound-type outcomes that drew on wilderness experiences, through a program within a normal school curriculum. This was to be achieved through drawing together the use of challenge ropes courses, initiative exercises and non-competitive games, but without the Outward Bound wilderness component (Schoel et al., 1988; Smolowe et al., 1999). The activities used in PA were not necessarily new, but rather, the way in which they were brought together and used within a total school curriculum is what gave these activities new meaning.

Many of today’s corporate experiential learning programs have their philosophical origins in the Outward Bound-style but have since followed diverse paths (Smolowe et al., 1999). The programs may have, initially, tended towards a wilderness program, with its strong similarities to Outward Bound, but today is more likely to be a program in an Outdoor Centre or Conference Centre that draws upon aspects of the Outward Bound model and/or the insights of the PA model, or even the use of adventure-based activities in more traditional training environments.

b. Outdoor Learnings, Indoor Environments

The value of wilderness, and even the less ‘wild’ outdoors, as places for personal and group development has support from historical writings dating back to Plato (Richards, 1987) and the Bible and also from research (e.g. Brand, 2001; Gass, 1993;
Handley, 1990; Handley, 1992), yet in the corporate world the opportunity to spend extended periods 'in the bush' may not be readily accepted nor achievable due to restrictions of time, money and opportunity. What is offered through models developed by organisations such as PA is the potential to achieve similar outcomes, as may be achieved through a prolonged wilderness or outdoor program, but with a significantly limited demand upon physical, financial and human resources.

The PA model uses what is referred to as 'adventure-based' learning in contexts that include classrooms, conference rooms, and outdoor settings. What becomes the focus is not the location, but the adventure component within the activity where adventure is a perception, a perception of uncertainty of outcomes, a perception of risk. Such adventure-based programs, as with outdoor programs, can be seen to form just one part of a bigger category referred to as experiential learning.

Any adventure-based program includes some level of risk. A participant’s perception of the risk may differ from the real level of risk as assessed by the facilitator or in terms of accidents, incidents and even mortality (Dickson, Chapman and Hurrell, 2000; Sandman, 1990; Slovic, 1997). This higher level of perceived risk is very real for the participant and may be significant in how the individual 'experiences' the program or activity. The role of 'risk' is considered in more detail in a discussion of activity choice in Section 3.3.3.b.

3.2.4. Involving the Whole Self, But What About Everyone Else?

As discussed above, experiential learning involves participation in an 'experience', whether that be indoors or outdoors. Another facet of the experience is the relationship of the individual with the experience. Writers commonly refer to the engagement of the whole self in the experience as being core to experiential learning such as in Thompson’s (1991) definition of experiential learning which focuses on Boud and Pascoe’s first dimension: the degree of learner involvement. For Thompson, experiential learning is learning that "combines the behavioral (sic), affective and cognitive dimensions" (Thompson, 1991:46). In reinforcing the holistic nature of experiential learning, Thompson notes that experiential learning need not take place in the outdoors, but it must involve the whole self. This is consistent with
Miles' reference to the value of high adventure risk recreation. For Miles the major benefit gained from such an adventure is that "one person confronts existentially the decision as to whether or not to venture forth into the unknown. Choice is exercised, the mind and the body committed, and the consequences accepted" (Miles, 1987:7).

Hopkins and Putnam (1993:78) build upon the concept of involvement of the whole self when they propose that experiential learning:

... offers a view of learning that prizes the individual’s response to and reflection on concrete experience. It encompasses our emotions, imagination, physical being as well as our intellect. Experiential learning is holistic in the true sense of the word.

While these definitions consider the involvement of ‘self’, they do not go the further step of considering the socially situated nature of learning and especially the socially situated nature of experiential learning where the individual primarily operates within the context of a group or team (Bell, 1993; Michelson, 1996; Wagner, Baldwin and Roland, 1991).

3.2.5. Reflection Upon the Experience

Hopkins and Putnam’s (1993) definition noted previously brings into consideration another aspect in experiential learning that of reflecting upon the experience, thus suggesting that the experience alone is insufficient. This concept was also proposed by Dewey in 1938 who suggested that “observation [of experiences] alone is not enough ... unless we reflect upon them [the experiences] ... go on to form a judgment of what may be expected.” (Dewey, 1938/1976:68). This debate continued through the 1960s through to the 1980s as organisations such as Outward Bound struggled with the move from allowing the ‘mountains to speak for themselves’, where the structure of the program and the experience is allowed to speak for itself without an instructor facilitating any form of reflection (James, 1980), through phases of instructor’s speaking for the experience and beyond (Bacon, 1983; Gass and Dobkin, 1993; James, 1980; Kalisch, 1979). This debate has continued into the 1990’s with further writing on potential ‘generations’ of facilitation that proposed an ever changing role of the instructor in managing the learning experience of the individual (Dunlop, 2000; Itin, 2000; Priest and Gass, 1993; Priest, Gass and Fitzpatrick, 1999). The model suggesting the existence of generations of facilitation is discussed in
Chapter 6 with an endeavour to deconstruct Priest and Gass’s article (1993) and to explore the underlying assumptions.

Boud and Pascoe’s (1978) dimension of learner involvement has similarities with Priest’s definition of experiential programming however Priest also adds to the learner’s ‘lived experience’ the need for a reflective process (Priest, 1996). Weil and McGill (1989), with their definition of experiential learning, emphasise the importance of moving beyond the experience with the making of meaning from the situation:

... a process whereby people, individually and in association with others, engage in direct encounter and then purposefully reflect upon, validate, transform, give personal meaning to and seek to integrate their different ways of knowing (Weil and McGill, 1989:248).

The consideration that an individual may have some level of power-over or even the ability to create their own meaning from a direct experience is paralleled by the Association of Experiential Education (AEE) which defines experiential education as “a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences” (Luckman, 1996:6-7). The AEE definitions raise several issues including:

- firstly, what, if any, methods of assessment and evaluation may be applied given that the learner constructs the knowledge
- secondly the struggle between individuals creating their own meaning and theory from their own experience and the need that may exist to infuse personal experience with a common stream of theory
- thirdly the challenge to the teacher/facilitator to provide a meaningful experience for all participants in the learning environment (Jansen and Wildermeersch, 1992; Wurdinger, 1996).

Dewey raised this latter issue earlier in 1938 as a crucial aspect to implementing an experiential curriculum. In light of Bell (1993) and Michelson’s (1996) comments, one may question whether it is truly possible to assume that any experiential learning program could be assessed for targeted outcomes that are achieved by all participants.
What is meaningful may not just relate to the experience itself, but the applicability of that experience in the broader life of each of the individual participants.

3.2.6. Application of the Experience

a. Reflection and Action

Kolb’s experiential learning cycle, with its origins in the work of Lewin (Beard and Wilson, 2002), is an often quoted, and dominant, model of experiential learning but usually with little critique (e.g. Kolb, 1984; Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Moon, 1999; Priest and Gass, 1997). Both Bell (1993) and Michelson (1996) present some particular concerns that reflect their feminist perspectives. For them the limitations of the model are due to its lack of acknowledgement of the individual nature of experience as well as the socially situated nature of experience. For Michelson there is also the critique of the causally unidirectional nature of the model that “neither acknowledges the mutual determination of experience and knowledge nor encourages an examination of experience as ideologically or psychologically overdetermined” (Michelson, 1996:634). Critique of Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory is explored in Section 3.6.6.d

![Figure 3-2 Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle](image)


b. Applying the Meaning

Luckner and Nadler (1997) add an additional layer that goes beyond the experience and reflection, that of meaning, where the meaning is applied in real life. For Luckner
and Nadler the reflection must lead onto the participants being able to “derive some useful insight from the analysis, and incorporate the result through a change in understanding and/or behavior (sic)”, (Luckner and Nadler, 1997:3). This has some parallels with Dewey’s suggestion that current experiences should “live fruitfully in subsequent experiences” (Dewey, 1938/1976:28) and to connect with Kolb’s fourth stage of the experiential learning cycle (Figure 3-2).

3.2.7. Examples of Experiential Learning Though History

Experiential learning as discussed above is not necessarily a new concept. There is evidence that it may have originated many thousands of years ago with individuals and groups growing and learning through their experiences in the wilderness such as the tales retold in the Bible. Overtime, as wildemesses have been explored, as society has changed and technology improved, the opportunities and the necessity for prolonged wilderness experiences has changed, resulting in a form of experiential learning that focuses on ‘bringing the adventure home’ and even indoors. Experiential learning is widely used in other professions as a key component of professional development, these include teaching, nursing, occupational health and safety and emergency management (Gilmartin, 2001; Nembhard and Uzumeri, 2000; Oekerman, 1997; Oosterheert and Vermunt, 2001). Within the corporate world the use of experiential learning programs, using adventure-based activities that can be delivered in training rooms and conference centres, resonates with a desire for a more efficient and effective use of the training dollar. These programs have their origins in wilderness journeys with organisations such as Outward Bound and as well as organisations such as Project Adventure that seek to achieve ‘wilderness outcomes’ in an urban or indoor environment.

a. Wandering Through the Wilderness

*I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and to see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not when I came to die, discover that I had not lived* (Thoreau, 1854/1986:135)

Within the context of journey based and wilderness programs, the wilderness forms part of the central ethos and appeal. The wilderness may be one of those things that is
in the ‘eye of the beholder’. One person’s area of ‘wilderness’ may be another person’s sanctuary and spiritual source. The Oxford Dictionary defines wilderness as:

1 an area that is not cultivated or settled; a desert … 2 ~ (of sth) an area where grass and other plants grow without any control (Crowther, 1995:1364).

‘Wild’ is defined as:

adj … living free in natural conditions …n. a natural state or environment (Crowther, 1995:1364).

Yet, the use of the terms wild and wilderness, such as ‘that person is wild’ or ‘in the wilderness’ suggests situations or places that are undesirable and objectionable. However for thousands of years the wilderness, and the outdoors more generally, has provided a powerful backdrop for learning and experiential growth in areas including spiritual and personal development. John Muir, a renowned conservationist in the United States, recalls his love for wild places and the impact of his early life in Scotland:

When I was a boy in Scotland, I was fond of everything that was wild, and all my life I’ve been growing fonder and fonder of wild places and wild creatures. Fortunately, around my native town of Dunbar, by the stormy North Sea, there was no lack of wildness (cited in: White, 1999:14).

While Fine (1992) recalls that wilderness “is often defined as a tonic for modernity” (Fine, 1992:166).

There are many tales that have been told that remind us of the power of the outdoors, nature and wilderness for growth and for change, this is not a new phenomenon. For the Australian Aborigines much of their Dreamtime over the past 40,000 years, and their sense of self is intrinsically linked to nature (Sandercock, 1998). The role of the outdoors and the wilderness environments is also significant in spiritual development in the Christian tradition such as with Moses and, later, Jesus. The Bible recounts the journeys of Moses and the Israelites, thousands of years ago, as they wandered through the desert for forty years coming to terms with their new role in the world, Jesus was tempted in the wilderness for forty days as preparation for his ministry. In other religions such as Buddhism, enlightenment is sought, in part, through nature (both wilderness and domesticated) under trees, outdoors and even prolonged periods in caves (Mackenzie, 1998). In 375 BC Plato promoted the use of physical activity as
a key component in the education of the guardians of the new society in *The Republic* when he recounts Socrates talking to Glaucon:

> And so we may venture to assert that anyone who can produce the perfect blend of the physical and intellectual sides of education and apply them to the training of character, is producing music and harmony of far more importance than any mere musician tuning strings (Plato, 375BC/1987:117)

And more recently, Thoreau, as quoted previously, wrote about his experiences at Walden Pond, Massachusetts in 1854.

### b. Wilderness In the Twentieth Century and Beyond

Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, understood the strength of learning in the wilderness when he established the Schloss Salem near Lake Constance in Germany. The mission was to "foster extraordinarily well-rounded young men and women, distinguished from other students of their age by, among other things, 'the gleam in their eyes'" (Zelinski and Shaeffer, 1991:6). This philosophy flowed on to his work in England, after fleeing Nazi Germany, when he established the Gordonstoun School as well as the Moray Badge Scheme, the Country Badge experiment and then Outward Bound (Hahn, 1957; Hogan, 1968; Zelinski and Shaeffer, 1991).

Wilderness journeys in the twenty-first century may be less about spiritual and personal enlightenment, but there is still a significant element in society who continue to seek adventure and pursue their wildernesses as can be seen in Australian magazines such as Wild, Rock, Xtreme Magazine and Outdoors Australia. These magazines also have their parallels in many other countries. Mountains have been climbed and oceans crossed by many who were entering the unknown, an unknown in which their true selves may be so clearly reflected (Brown, 1999; Hillary, 1999). Some climbed those mountains just because they were there, but in doing so they may have had the opportunity to learn about themselves, about others and about the natural world. They went to climb a mountain and found themselves (Hayhurst, 1997).

Today people continue to ‘go bush’ to find themselves and to energise themselves (Scherl, 1986). Scherl (1987) talks about our need for wilderness, the wilderness which can be a means to facilitate peak experiences, acquire new skills and to explore the inner self. How is this of relevance to organisations? What has this to do with
training in organisations? Maybe it is more appropriate to do as Zemke suggests "that the most productive management training brings together real management teams and has them work on real business problems in real time" (Zemke, 1988:8). Not everyone accepts this view. Bank (1985) suggests that outdoor development programs can provide real problems for real people in real time. In beginning to consider this question one may look to a quote from Hahn twenty years before Bank:

I was interviewed by a journalist in Wales. He asked me: 'How can methods you believe in do justice to the Indoor-type'. He was horrified when I said, 'by chasing him outside'. Then there was another journalist, a very distinguished one, who said: 'How can Gordonstoun do justice to the Introvert?' ... I answered: 'By providing circumstances which turn him inside out.' A third one wondered how we deal with the extrovert. My answer shocked him: 'By turning him outside in.' (Hahn, 1965:2)

The period of 1987 to 1992 saw a significant increase in the use of outdoor training in Australia from 5% of Australian private and public sector employers in 1987 to 23% in 1992 (Boylen, 1992). This shift in usage aligns with a word-wide popularity (Wagner et al., 1991; Wagner and Roland, 1992) and adoption of outdoor programs as a training medium which may suggest that the effectiveness of such training should be assessed.

3.2.8. Conclusion

Experiential learning in its broadest definition may involve a variety of strategies ranging from books to classrooms to games and activities to outdoor programs and onto simulations and multimedia presentations, but for many writers, the experience does not make it 'experiential learning'. Experiential learning has two components: the experience and the learning. The connection between the two is the process of reflection or 'meaning-making' that moves beyond the experience into learning that results in changes in thinking, understanding and/or behaving. For the purposes of this review, focus will be upon programs that require:

A holistic involvement (i.e. cognitive, affective and behavioural) in a range of activities where significant emphasis is placed upon a reflective process (before, during and/or after) as a crucial component of the experience.

Thus the experience may be prior to, concurrent with or even in the future with respect to the reflective process. The intent of the reflective process is to weave the current
experience into the web of prior experiences to bring about change in an individual's life. To this end, programs may include indoor and outdoor programs involving a range of simulations, games, and initiatives through to a broad range of outdoor activities that involve traditional outdoor pursuits as well as non-traditional adventure activities, but may exclude lectures, case studies and small group discussions.

3.3. Corporate Experiential Learning Programs

As with the broader area of experiential learning, the application of experiential learning in a corporate setting may also be plagued by the lack of consensus regarding a definition (Hayllar, 1997; Irvine and Wilson, 1994; Thompson, 1991). Despite the lack of consensus there does appear to be a high level of consistency as to the origins of what may be included under these various titles such as the impact of writings of Plato (or more correctly Socrates), Hahn and the Outward Bound schools. With some clarity of meaning it may be possible to move onto the key components of corporate experiential learning program (CELP) and the contributing factors to the possible success of such programs. One way that may be applied to assist in defining what is a CELP is to approach the potential program from four different perspectives to determine whether there may be some consistency across the literature. The four perspectives are:

- the label or terminology given to the style of program to be implemented
- the location of the program
- the activities to be conducted, and
- the proposed outcomes of the program

3.3.1. A Matter of Terminology

The lack of clarity as to the meaning of what may be considered a CELP is evident as one moves through the literature and observes the way in which authors use various terms interchangeably as if they are synonymous. This flexibility may overshadow the nuances that may be embedded in each term. While it is important to ensure that we are clear as to what we are talking about, the pressure for definition should not be
purely as an outcome of a desire to ensure that people are clear as to which 'box' CELP bests fit. It may be that CELP does not fit any particular box cleanly, but rather that it straddles several boxes that reflect its diverse origins, influences and outcomes. Even suggesting the notion of a 'box' can be problematic and limiting. One of the major difficulties is the use of terms such as 'outdoor' to explain programs that may or may not have a significant outdoor component.

Richards (1987) lists over thirty terms used for different aspects of outdoor programs. This list includes adventure, camps, environmental, experiential, field, initiative, leisure, life, mountain, outdoor, recreational, risk, survival, Outward Bound and wilderness. Each term may indicate a slightly different nuance within, or location of, the program, or alternatively different terms may simply be used to describe the same program. Many programs have been referred to as 'Outward Bound type' program (Abbott, 1989; Kalisch, 1979), however this terminology has seemingly declined in the writings of the 1980s and 1990s, possibly in line with the increase of many other providers of similar programs. CELPs may connect with some or all of these outdoor-related terms. The use by the current media of the term 'outward bound' as a generic label for any outdoor program as distinct from its use as the identifier of a particular organisation, is a bit like calling the all of the products known as 'tissues' by the brand name Kleenexes!

Thompson defined experiential learning as combining "the behavioral (sic), affective and cognitive dimensions" (Thompson, 1991:46) but then goes on to equate outdoor experiential learning with experiential learning, adventure learning and outdoor challenge training. Miller and Rooke (1991) also move through a range of terms in reference to the one program, the terms include: outdoor management development, experiential management development, outdoor experiential learning and experiential learning.

The term Outdoor Management Development (OMD) is frequently used by writers appearing in UK, European and South Pacific journals (e.g. Badger, Sadler-Smith and Michie, 1997; Burletson and Grint, 1996; Easterby-Smith and Thorpe, 1997; Hayllar, 1997; Irvine and Wilson, 1994; Jones and Oswick, 1993; McEvoy and Buller, 1997; McGraw, 1992)
Jones and Oswick in reviewing the literature sought to establish some criteria for inclusion within OMD. These criteria are based on the three terms: outdoor, management and development. It was suggested that for a program to be included as OMD it should have the following characteristics:

- the outdoors should be used as the training medium, as a means to the end of developing managerial skills, not outdoor skills
- management, in this context, refers to the role people are expected to play within their organisations
- development relates to an increase in effectiveness of the participants to do their jobs (Jones and Oswick, 1993:12).

Rather than defining OMD, Irvine and Wilson (1994) seek to identify the basis of effective OMD as being six essential elements, these elements do not even make reference to the need for the program to be conducted outdoors. The essential elements include:

- the novelty of the program and/or activities
- psychological risk
- potential to increase complexity
- replication of the difficulties faced in organisations
- involving little prior skills and
- that the experience can be reviewed.

They suggest that to exclude any element is to risk that the activity “is likely to be little better than knitting in the woods, or a fun fair ride” (Irvine and Wilson, 1994:36). As mooted above, other programs or activities may fulfil these criteria without ever being in the outdoors.

Other terms that have been used to cover this broad area include:

- adventure-based experiential training (Ibbetson and Newell, 1996),
• adventure-learning (Petrini, 1990)
• adventure-style (Dapin, 1996)
• adventure training programs (Bramwell, Forrester, Houle, Larocque, Villeneuve and Priest, 1997; James, 1996),
• experience-based training (Snow, 1992)
• experience-based training and development (Luckman, 1996),
• experiential education (McGraw, 1993)
• experiential-based training and development (Miner, 1990)
• outdoor development courses (MacErlean, 1993),
• outdoor development programs (Bank, 1985; Burnett, 1994),
• outdoor Machiavellian development (Burletson and Grint, 1996)
• outdoor management development (Irvine and Wilson, 1994)
• outdoor management education (McEvoy and Buller, 1997)
• outdoor training program (Arkin, 1991; Welch, 1997)
• outdoor-based development (Jones and Oswick, 1993)
• wilderness lab (Long, 1987).

From the broad evidence provided it appears that there are a three key words that need to be considered: outdoor, adventure and experiential, the latter has been addressed in detail above. With respect to ‘outdoor’, the word may provide more evidence of location than a broad term for this style of program given the elements of a successful OMD provided by Irvine and Wilson (1994). The concept of location is discussed further below. The term ‘adventure’ brings with it its own difficulties when applying it to a program where there are defined outcomes, as may be expected in a CELP. A dictionary definition of adventure is:
... an unusual, exciting or dangerous experience; excitement associated with danger, taking risks etc (Crowther, 1995:18).

Excitement may well enhance the learning experience by involving the emotions, but the inclusion of risk and danger may raise ethical questions of the value of the adventure-based program for corporate clients. One may well ask whether it is possible to achieve the same outcomes in a manner that involves less risk. There are further questions that need consideration with respect to risk such as: Who sets the accepted level of risk? Is it the perceived or real level of risk? Can someone voluntarily accept the level of risk if they have no prior experience in the activity? The role of risk is discussed further below in the context of activity selection.

3.3.2. Location

Given the definition of experiential learning above as being “programs that require a holistic involvement (i.e. cognitive, affective and behavioural) in a range of activities where significant emphasis is placed upon a reflective process as a crucial component of the experience” it may be possible to initially categorise corporate experiential learning programs by their physical location then to further categorise the outdoors by reference to the extent of the use of the natural environment (Killop, 1992; Thompson, 1991; Wagner et al., 1991). This may then give rise to the following location categories:

- Indoors, e.g. Conference rooms
- Outdoors, e.g. Wilderness programs and Centre-based programs

a. Indoors

Indoor programs may be offered in a wide range of locations from the work site and training rooms through to conference centres and educational institutions. The vast array of activity books, especially by authors such as Rohnke (Rohnke, 1984; Rohnke, 1989; Rohnke and Butler, 1995), has given rise to many activities that may be used indoors. This has been an extension of Project Adventure’s aim of being able to achieve wilderness-type outcomes in a more traditional classroom or school setting (Little, 1980; Schoel et al., 1988; Webster, 1980). By adopting the definition of
experiential learning above, indoor programs that do not draw upon the cognitive, affective and behavioural will not be considered in this context.

b. Outdoors

Outdoor programs, as indicated above, may be conducted in wilderness and non-wilderness settings. In a study conducted in the U.S.A. of outdoor training programs it was discovered that 23% of programs were wilderness programs with an average cost of USD 1,500-4,000 per participant. The companies sent between one and 75 employees, averaging at 15. This compared to the 77% of programs using outdoor centres with an emphasis on the use of ropes courses with an average cost of USD 300 with an attendance range of 20 - 5,000 averaging 250 (Wagner et al., 1991:54).

i. Wilderness Programs

The wilderness program may involve an extended period in the wilderness involving strenuous and exciting outdoor pursuits - such as you expect in any 'adventure' (Thompson, 1991; Wagner et al., 1991). Abbott (1989) defines the 'wilderness experience' as a "trip in a relatively remote area for an extended time" (Abbott, 1989:11). Wilderness courses have a strong heritage with the Outward Bound style of course where it is mobile and involves a variety of outdoor pursuits (e.g. abseiling, rafting, bushwalking, rock climbing). The wilderness program usually has as the goal of improving personal skills such as leadership and decision making in the context of a supportive and co-operative group, however group development is usually not a key objective (Thompson, 1991; Wagner et al., 1991). Due to the time, cost, physical demands and logistics, wilderness programs are not necessarily a key strategy in many corporate experiential programs (Bolt, 1990; Boylen, 1992) and as a result are not considered further in this review. However various authors have suggested that wilderness is something that has a significant role for the quality of life and thus is something that may be needed to be researched further (e.g. Abbott, 1989; Andrews, 1999; Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Handley, 1990; Johnson and Fredrickson, 2000; Scherl, 1986; Scherl, 1987; Thoreau, 1854/1986).
ii. Outdoor Centre Programs

Outdoor centre programs are significantly more popular in CELP in part due to their time and cost benefits, but also as a result of their potential program variety and accessibility to a range of skill and fitness levels.

Outdoor centre programs have strong links with the activities made popular by organisations such as Project Adventure. This then reduces the need, as in a modern Outward Bound program, to be in the wilderness for a prolonged period with all its associated costs, logistical problems and risks. Project Adventure has brought together a range of games, initiatives and challenge ropes course elements that may be used as individual events or linked together to form a program that extends over several days, weeks or months. There has been a widening of the use of their ‘model’ in areas ranging from prisons, mental institutions, and to corporate training. Outdoor centre programs that use this style of activity may be further categorised according to the activity type that may be mixed and matched as indicated by the following list of activities:

- initiatives
- low ropes courses
- high ropes courses
- outdoor pursuits.

The latter two have higher degrees of perceived risk, while the former have lower perceived levels of perceived risk. In the context of CELP all have the group as their focus (Wagner et al., 1991:55). Even though these programs have been included under the outdoor category it is possible to build and conduct a complete challenge ropes program totally indoors with the possibility of achieving similar outcomes to an out-of-doors program.

The literature, as discussed in 3.3.3, suggests that the location of a CELP may be diverse and can include games in a hallway or a classroom through to days, and even weeks of struggling through the wilderness. At the heart of the issue continues to be the involvement of: mind, body and spirit and thus is not cognitive learning alone, and
where reflection is a key component of the total experience. As such, the location of the program indoors or out-of-doors is not the most relevant aspect, rather that the programs involved use experiential learning strategies that are holistic and include reflection with the aim of aiding the transference of learning. This literature while considering location, does not consider the impact of that location upon the experience – a theme taken up in Chapter 6.

### 3.3.3. Activities

The choice of activity used as part of ‘the experience’ in a CELP will be influenced by factors such as: the activities available, the level of impact or risk and the emphasis placed upon the individual or the group within the activity as discussed in the following section.

#### a. Activity Options and Selection

The diversity of terms and applications applied to CELP is mirrored in the range of activities. Activities applied include a range of outdoor pursuits as well as non-traditional activities.

**Outdoor Pursuits**

- abseiling (Arkin, 1991; Boylen, 1992; Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988; Dapin, 1996)
- canoeing (Badger et al., 1997; Dainty and Lucas, 1992; Thompson, 1991)
- caving (Badger et al., 1997)
- hiking (Beeby and Rathborn, 1982)
- orienteering (Badger et al., 1997; Beeby and Rathborn, 1982)
- rock climbing (Badger et al., 1997; Boylen, 1992; Van Zweiten, 1984; Wagner et al., 1991)
- sailing (Thompson, 1991; Wagner et al., 1991)
- white water rafting (Badger et al., 1997; Schrank, 1994; Thompson, 1991; Wagner et al., 1991)

Non-traditional Activities
- board games (Bolt, 1990)
- challenge ropes courses (Broderick, 1989; Garvey, 1989; Snow, 1992; Wagner et al., 1991)
- initiatives (Beeby and Rathborn, 1982; Bramwell et al., 1997; Buller, Cragun and McEvoy, 1991)

Over the past two decades there has been an increase in the use of ‘artificial’ activities or non-traditional activities such as Challenge Ropes Courses and Indoor Climbing (Attarian, 2001), even to the extent of artificial white water experiences for rafting and canoeing. This shift to more controlled environments may be a result of a range of influences such as access, accessibility by people with different physical needs, increase in both demand and supply for adventure-based activities, a greater sense of control over the levels of real and perceived risk and even a possible change in consumer expectations and experiences as people seek to ‘taste’ or ‘graze’ over a range of activities.

The specific choice of activities for a CELP may well benefit from referring back to Zemke’s comments (1988) about taking managers to the board room and the problem of the level of distraction from workplace-relevant learning when there is a significant emphasis upon learning outdoor or specific technical skills to participate in the experience. Drawing upon Boud’s work, the question may also be asked as to the degree of correspondence of the learning environment to the real environment (Boud, 1989), or in this case, the degree of correspondence of the learning experience to the real work experience. This is consistent with Hahn’s work with merchant seamen in Outward Bound (Hogan, 1968).

Irvine and Wilson (1994) (who refer to these corporate programs as outdoor management development) suggests that the choice of activities for OMD courses is important. In supporting their argument they refer to Dainty and Lucas (1992) who claim that climbing, canoeing, abseiling and sailing may be inappropriate in that the
prescribed nature of the technical skills may take away from the more important interpersonal aspects of the experience and ultimately the potential learning outcomes. Irvine and Wilson give preference to tasks that reflect the workplace environment, rather than activity-specific skills. This view is taken to the extreme by Zemke when criticising the role of experiential management development program by professing “that the most productive management training brings together real management teams and has them work on real business problems in real time. No, it’s the only productive way to train managers” (Zemke, 1988:8). For Dainty and Lucas (1992) preference is not given to a particular activity, but rather it is the combination with a higher intensity of processing that impacts upon their activity preference. The value, or otherwise, of the use of non-management activities is considered further in the section on metaphors in Section 3.4.4.

Other research has made suggestion that the level of novelty or fun is important (Cain and Jolliff, 1998; Hayllar, 1997; Priest et al., 2000; Rohnke and Butler, 1995). This is not specifically considered by Zemke (1988) nor by other writers such as Kurt Hahn (e.g. Hahn, 1957; Hahn, 1965) or Boud and Pascoe (e.g. Boud, 1989).

b. Impact and Risk

Cacioppe and Adamson (1988) as well as Wagner and Roland (1992) offer a further distinction between programs based on the level of impact and perceived risk of activities, rather than the specific activity itself. The two programs types offered are:

- low-impact: where initiatives with limited physical risk are the primary activity and where the group usually consists of an intact work group; and

- high-impact programs that use initiatives with a higher level of perceived risk (as distinct from real risk) with individuals being the focus of the program (Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988; Wagner and Roland, 1992).

This distinction would locate wilderness programs as a high impact program, with many outdoor centre programs as low-impact programs. A difficulty with a distinction based upon perception of risk is to decide whose perception is the determining factor, as perceptions may vary according to factors including, age, prior experience, culture, gender, the environment and the activity sequence. The parties...
involved who may hold different risk perceptions include: the participants, the facilitator, the facility owner and the sponsoring organisation. Cacioppe and Adamson as well as Wagner and Roland's types also introduce the distinction between the organisation, group and individual outcomes as discussed below.

For the purposes of this study the focus will be upon experiential learning strategies that primarily involve activities such as initiative tasks and problem solving, however the broader understanding of 'experiential' will be considered given the use of autoethnography as well as the experiences of post graduate students. Consistent with the definition of experiential learning above, it is not the activity that is of primary concern it is the achievement of the outcomes that is of major importance, an achievement that may be aided by the process of reflection upon the experience as well as the acknowledgment of learning through other avenues apart from that constructed by the facilitator.

c. Individual versus Group

Cacioppe and Adamson (1988), in their review of outdoor development programs, categorise activities depending upon whether they have an individual focus or a group focus. Table 3-1 provides a summary of those groupings for a range of activities.

While Cacioppe and Adamson (1988) have placed most challenge ropes course activities under the individual list, some facilitators will use these activities as group activities by providing specific roles for other group members such as belaying and spotting. While the orienteering course is included as a group activity, in some contexts this may be used as an individual activity with rogaining being a group variation. No matter whether an activity is chosen for its individual focus or its group focus, there is the potential for group outcomes to be achieved through individual activities, just as individual outcomes may be achieved through group activities.
Table 3-1 Activities Used in Outdoor Programs

| Source: Adapted from Ron Cacioppe and Peter Adamson (1988) 'Stepping Over the Edge: Outdoor development programs for management and staff', Human Resource Management Australia, Nov., p. 83 |

### d. Experiential Instead of Activity-based

A problem that relates to this discussion to date is the apparent expectation that an experiential program is about scheduling activities whether they be indoor, outdoor, individual or group. Hovelynck (2001) suggests that experiential learning is “understood in terms of three processes, which may occur simultaneously or in separate stage, i.e. recognising, acknowledging and reconnoitring” (Hovelynck, 2001:54). This understanding does not relate to activity selection nor about debriefing or experiential learning cycles. These understandings focus upon ‘process’ rather than activity, learning is viewed as a “process of developing assumptions that people embody in their behaviour” (Hovelynck, 2001:54). This behaviour or enactment is explored further in the discussion on the role of metaphors in 3.4.4.

### 3.3.4. Outcomes

The range of corporate experiential learning programs that incorporate the various activities listed above are purported to be able to achieve a wide variety of training outcomes that extend from the individual, to the group and beyond. Some of the outcomes that programs have been said to be able to achieve range from having a small to a large impact such as the following:

- change someone’s whole perspective on life (Gall, 1987)
- develop problem solving skills (Arkin, 1991)
- discover inner resources (Cole, 1987)
• enhance leadership (Badger et al., 1997; Beeby and Rathborn, 1982)

• increased self confidence and self awareness (Beeby and Rathborn, 1982; Burnett, 1994; Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988)

• jolt participants out of their complacency (Broderick, 1989)

• speed up the learning and change process (Bolt, 1990)

• teach teamwork skills (Badger et al., 1997; Boylen, 1992; Buller et al., 1991).

Knakauer even suggests that "(o)nce they (the participants) learn how to conquer the wilderness, the business world is a pushover" (quoted in: Gahin and Chesteen, 1988:36). With such a wide range of claims it is understandable that there would be questions about how effective these courses are in achieving what they set out to achieve.

The major categorisation of outcomes suggested by Cacioppe and Adamson (1988), as indicated by their categorisation of activities, is similar to Wagner and Roland (1992) above:

• individual/personal development

• group development.

Dainty and Lucas (1992) categorise outcomes on the basis of the interaction between the ‘tightness’ of the activity and the intensity of the processing. This gives rise to four potential categories of outcomes represented by the Outdoor Development Matrix in Figure 3-3.
This method of categorisation suggests that Quadrant 1 and 2 Outcomes risk being focused only upon outdoor skills, even the narrow skills of Quadrant 2 may be relevant where there is limited processing to enhance the transfer to the work context. Quadrants 3 and 4 have the greatest potential for specific outcomes relevant to management learning, primarily because of the high intensity of processing that enhances the transfer. The concepts of transfer and processing of experiences will be explored in greater depth below.

Badger et al (1997) in a survey of 100 firms in the south west of England identified the key skills areas that were hoped to be developed through the outdoor management development programs they used (Table 3-2).

From the literature it is evident that the variety of potential outcomes seems limitless and may even suggest that “all things to all people are possible spanning a wide
spectrum from encouraging lifestyle changes to engendering fun and enjoyment” (Dainty and Lucas, 1992: 111). For the purposes of this study, the focus will be upon organisational-relevant outcomes, including individuals, groups and the organisation as a whole. Thus outcomes may, for one organisation, be fun and enjoyment, while for another, self and other awareness in a group context will be required. While the intent would be to negotiate outcomes prior to a program and that programs will be designed, facilitated and delivered with those outcomes in mind, the use of autoethnography and university subjects limits the possibility of achieving this. Even though there may be an emphasis upon specific outcomes, as will be discussed, the actual outcomes achieved may be different, more, less or the same as the prescribed outcomes.

3.3.5. Conclusion

Given the variety of terms available, the difficulties of applying words such as ‘outdoors’ when some or most of a program may be indoors, as well as the elements of risk and danger implied by the term ‘adventure’ the term: Corporate Experiential Learning Programs will continue to be used in this thesis for those experiential learning programs conducted for corporate clients, with the emphasis being upon outcomes (individual, group and/or organisational) that contribute to the achievement of the organisation’s goals. The participants in such programs would not be limited to managers or the development of future managers as the purpose of team building programs may be to work with intact work groups including individuals from all levels of an organisation.

Having clarified the meaning of ‘Corporate Experiential Learning Programs’ a further consideration relates to the effectiveness of those programs. With such a diverse range of programs that have the potential to push the comfort zones and understanding levels of those with strong preferences for more traditional modes of learning the possible outcomes and measures of effectiveness may also be broad.
3.4. Effectiveness of Corporate Experiential Learning Programs

A major issue facing providers of CELPs is whether or not it actually works. Various influencing factors have been proposed that are suggested will influence the effectiveness of CELP's, these factors will be addressed under the following categories:

- organisational influences
- program planning
- program delivery: metaphors
- participant selection and motivation
- facilitator skills, and
- individual learner.

Prior to focusing upon these categories the questions of the "What is effectiveness?" and "For whom are we being effective?" are first considered.

3.4.1. Evaluation of Effectiveness

a. What is Effectiveness?

The process of evaluation of any training program is necessary both in terms of assessing the effectiveness of the training, but also to ensure the continued growth and development of appropriate and effective training. Evaluation seeks to achieve not only assessment of the effectiveness of the training, but also to receive feedback about the training. Evaluation of a training event can occur at several levels. Kirkpatrick (cited in Delahaye, 2000:351-53) identified four levels of evaluation which are:

Level 1 Reaction of the participants to the learning process
Level 2 Learning gained
Level 3 Behaviour change evidenced on the job
Hamblin (cited in Miner, 1990:24), expanded upon these to develop five levels of evaluation:

Level 1 Training

Level 2 Reactions: how trainees react to training

Level 3 Learning: acquire ability to behave in new ways

Level 4 Job behaviour: application of learning to job

Level 5 Organisation: effects of behaviour on organisation

A survey conducted in the United States of America (USA) of outdoor training programs revealed that 45% did no evaluations at all, while fewer than 2% used any form of empirical data to evaluate their programs (Wagner et al., 1991), with the assumption here being that empirical data is of the highest value. One of the main deterrents of conducting an accurate evaluation process is the cost (Buller et al., 1991). The use of the 'smile' or 'happiness' sheet may only provide a superficial evaluation of a course that is subject to a large degree of bias and influence (Smith, 1990). Another method of 'evaluating' the effectiveness of a program that is used (possibly more often than is admitted) is based upon the anecdotal evidence of the participants (Thompson, 1991; Wagner et al., 1991) and the conclusion that if the companies keep coming back then the programs must be effective (Ayers cited in Fishman, Unknown). These two methods of evaluation are only at level one of both Kirkpatrick and Hamlin's models.

Drawing from the insights of human resource development, a more appropriate process of evaluation would begin in the planning stage, with evaluation strategies being established that are consistent with the program objectives and that extend to the work situation of the participant as suggested by the Human Resource Development Process Model (Figure 3-4).
Evaluation that does not address the issue of transfer to the workplace, that is to Level three and four of Hamblin and Kirkpatrick's models, via a process of follow-up and assessment of changes in work-related skills should give rise to questions about its professionalism and long-term effectiveness. Assessment of Level five of Hamblin's model, while desirable, may be practically impossible due to the influence of other factors upon the profitability of a company. Other means to assess at this level include the use of measures as discussed within Total Quality Management principles (McGraw, 1992:9).

While a significant component of any experiential learning program is the processing of the experiences, other contributing factors that may influence the effectiveness of a program include: program planning, participant selection, facilitator role and the use of metaphors, all of which may be designed to complement the formal processing strategies. Effectiveness in this context is taken to mean that there is an observable change in the participants within the workplace following the training program consistent with the objectives of the program. That is, there is a transference of the learning from the training program to the workplace, and that this transference is apparent over an extended period of time such as six months, this would also lead to looking at the role of follow-ups to support the longevity of transference (Priest and Lesperance, 1994).
b. For whom are we being effective?

When asking the question about effectiveness, consideration may need to be given to who is the actual client of the program. Schein (1997) suggests that in any helping or change process it is necessary to determine who is the client. In the model proffered by Schein there are at least six potential clients from any one change process. This model may also be applied to the training and development role where training consultants are brought in to provide training programs, including CELP’s. The model of the basic types of clients offered by Schein is as follows (Schein, 1997:202-3):

Contact clients - the individual(s) who first contact the consultant with a request, question or issue.

Intermediate clients - the individuals or groups who or which get involved in various interviews, meetings, and other activities as the project evolves.

Primary clients - the individual(s) who ultimately “own” the problem or issue being worked on; they are typically also the ones who pay the consulting bills or whose budget covers the consultation project.

Unwitting clients – members of the organization or client system above, below and laterally related to the primary clients who will be affected by interventions but who are not aware that they will be impacted.

Indirect clients – members of the organization who are aware that they will be affected by the interventions but who are unknown to the consultant and who may feel either positive or negative about these effects …

Ultimate clients – the community, the total organization, an occupational group, or any other group that the consultant cares about and whose welfare must be considered in any intervention that the consultant makes.

To this end, the ‘client’ of a training program may go beyond the recipient of the actual experience and could include others who may be impacted by changes in behaviour, attitudes and skills such as: supervisors, co-workers, customers, family members and shareholders.

3.4.2. Organisational Influences

a. Organisational Culture

If effectiveness is deemed to be related to the transfer of learning to the workplace, one important aspect that will influence the transfer will be the culture of learning.
within the organisation such as with the learning organisation (Senge, 1990/1992). What mechanisms exist to encourage or support transfer? What systems are in place to review and apply the learning? What resistance may there be to people who are perceived to be trying to get ahead or improve themselves? What is the level of support from upper management for the employee to implement their skills? (Delahaye, 2000). Rusaw (2000) suggests that resistance to changes as a result of training “appears as irrationally-based and protective of the status-quo ... those in power may reveal resistance subtly by controlling the format of discussion, imposing definitions of needs, approving training content, and selecting individuals who attend training events.” (Rusaw, 2000:257-8).

b. Upper Management Commitment and Involvement

Even though negative organisational cultures exist, it is still suggested that upper management support and encouragement are critical to the success of an outdoor training program (Crawford, 1988; Galagan, 1987b; Gall, 1987). Mol and Vermeulen (1988) suggest that the major influence upon the success of any management development program is dependent upon the commitment of upper management (Mol and Vermeulen, 1988). Where there is commitment from above, then there will begin to exist an organisational sub-culture that is conducive to new skills and learning being implemented, and thus transferred. The symptoms of lack of upper management support include splitting up work teams that have attended training together, lack of follow-up of participants by upper management which may translate into unsustainable outcomes (Bramwell et al., 1997; Gall, 1987). The problem of lack of management commitment is also noted by Rusaw (2000) who writes from a critical theory perspective. Rusaw suggests that “trained employees may have the skills, but lack the power to change poor work conditions. In addition, managers may fail to give employees opportunities and resources for making changes” (Rusaw, 2000:249).

Galagan (1987b) cites a method of overcoming the problems of lack of upper management commitment that involves delivering the experiential learning exercises at the top of the organisation first and working down. The objectives of the training need to be linked to the objectives of the organisation, a process that begins in the pre-planning stage (see discussion below). The result of working through all levels of the
organisation with a program that aims to coincide with the direction of the organisation is that the culture of the organisation can change. There is also an understanding throughout the organisation about the objectives of the training. In addition there is also the increased possibility for the necessary support from upper management to be provided for individuals to experiment with their new learning and to implement change in their own work practices and the work practices of their subordinates (Galagan, 1987b).

Priest (1995a) discusses the impact of an outdoor management development program (also referred to as a corporate adventure training program - CAT) on the culture of an Australian Public Service organisation. Over 4,000 employees, including all levels of management, participated in the program involving group initiatives and high ropes courses (Priest, 1995a). The study focused upon the perceptions of 100 managers before, during and after the program. The results suggested that the CAT program assisted the culture change, however the study was not able to take into account the influence of the significantly changing environment at the time. The nature of causality is unclear, some of the possibilities are:

- the influence of the CAT program;
- the influence of the changing climate (from monopoly to competition) that could include a shift in culture from public sector to private enterprise;
- a Hawthorn effect;
- the result of previous organisational issues that “came to a head” at that time; and
- any combination of the above.

As suggested by Priest (1995a), without a control company, identifying the actual cause of the change may be difficult, however the fact that the upper management were satisfied with the program and the changes to the organisation’s culture may be sufficient evidence of effectiveness for that organisation. As a public sector organisation, other ‘clients’ that may be considered include both the government and the public as the de facto shareholders as well as being the organisation’s customers.
The above issues, and those that follow, are explored further by McGraw (1992, 1993) who identifies six problems that will impact upon the transfer of learning from an outdoor management development program to the workplace. The problems are:

- inadequate organisational analysis prior to the program;
- problems related to corporate culture;
- lack of senior management support;
- unmotivated participants;
- development of skills in the program that do not mirror real workplace problems;

### 3.4.3. Program Planning

In discussing activity selection previously, reference was made to the work of Hovelynck (e.g. Hovelynck, 1998; Hovelynck, 2001) and his observations regarding program design in Outward Bound Belgium. The following discussion takes a more traditional line regarding program planning that has strong influences from the writings of human resource development.

**a. Pre-Planning**

As with all training it is necessary to clearly establish the objectives of the training program (Delahaye, 2000; DeSimone and Harris, 1998; Rylatt and Lohan, 1995; Sofo, 1999). A needs analysis that highlights the corporate, as well as the individual needs, will provide a strong basis for a well developed course. Mol and Vermeulen (1988) suggest that the planning stage of any management development program should be carried out at three levels. The three levels are:

- the organisational analysis of future management needs;
- an operational analysis to determine specific management skills; and
- a personal analysis to determine the development needs of the individual.

The needs analysis may also assist in identifying the level of support for, and follow-up, of learning within the organisation and thus influence the potential effectiveness of the program.

In the process of the needs analysis where techniques such as interviews and group discussions are held with potential participants there may also be the possibility to begin to enhance the learning of the individual as they are able to start the process of asking themselves questions such as: “What is it that I need/want out of this program?” The simple process of beginning to ask these questions may enhance the learning experience as they are beginning to “process” or reflect upon what it is that may happen on the program (Boud, 1997).

Where there is an outdoor component of the course that is provided by a separate organisation it may be advisable that the outdoor provider be part of the negotiations of the course structure, rather than seemingly ‘tacking’ the outdoor component on as an extra piece (Garvey, 1989). As discussed later, the establishment within the planning stage of evaluation strategies will also aid in the effectiveness of the program.

Where the planning stage involves all possible participants, this stage may further assist in enhancing the effectiveness of the CELP by introducing the participants to the basic concepts of the program, such as the use of metaphors and processing and reflection activities (Buller et al., 1991), or to offer a time for participants to ‘contract’ to commit themselves to change and to write down their goals and objectives for the course (Gass, 1985). This latter aspect assists in placing more emphasis upon the participant to be responsible for their own learning.

b. Activity Selection

As discussed in 3.3.3 there is a substantial number of potential activities that may be selected as part of any corporate experiential learning program. Wagner and Campbell, in discussing the challenges faced by providers of outdoor-based experiential training, cite a program that used an additional step in the program to assist in the program transfer. Their additional step is ‘virtual reality’, not of the
computer kind, but where participants were asked to facilitate a group of school students in a mock community consultation. It is suggested that the virtual reality training "presents a unique opportunity for the participants to:

- Experience the entire life cycle of an organization, from creation to termination;
- Experience penalties and payoffs, which are real and inescapable, since they are controlled by someone outside of the development environment;
- Experience real feedback on their performance from real customers;
- Confront their actual behaviours and attitudes about a number of work-related areas" (Wagner and Campbell, 1994:6-7).

From the perspective of adult education or vocational education, what is suggested as a "new and potentially vital link in the OBET training process" (Wagner and Campbell, 1994:6), would appear to have significant similarities to the use role plays, on-the-job experience, use of simulators and case studies. The choice of activities must jump the hurdle of Zemke's (1988) comments, but also the value of metaphors as discussed below. In assisting the transfer of learning, and thus the effectiveness of the program, other writers look to additional, follow-up, experiences, upon the participants' return to work.

c. Follow-up

The follow-up experience is one of ten strategies suggested by Gass (Gass, 1985; Gass, 1987) in order to assist in the transfer of learning. The follow-up involves extending the program into the "home" environment. This may involve additional activities in areas such as communications, processes, choices and dealing with blockages to achieving goals. The rationale for this and many others strategies for assisting transference of learning is that "unless we assist our students in providing their own linkages, bridges, and connections to their learning, the utility of much of the education we care about and work so hard to bring about is put away in the equipment room with the ropes and backpacks" (Gass, 1987:257). The essential nature of the follow-up process is supported by Doherty in finding that "the data also
reveal that most of the initial learning had been lost 30 days after the ropes course experience, a clear indication that follow-up procedures are absolutely essential if benefits are to be preserved”. Doherty further cites Priest and Lesperance (1994) who concluded that “six months after corporate adventure training (CAT), any benefits gained may be lost without follow-up procedures” (Doherty, 1995:17).

The impact of planning and follow-up procedures on the transference and retention of learning may suggest that the planning process was inadequate and/or that the experience alone does not achieve long term learning, but that a process of preparation and revision is needed. This is not a new concept. Circa 1880, Ebbinghaus (Frischknecht and Capelli, 1995) first referred to the problems of forgetting following a learning experience in his Curve of Forgetting. The suggestion from Ebbinghaus is that regular review or follow-up is necessary if the learning is to last beyond one day (Figure 3-5).

Figure 3-5 Ebbinghaus’s Curve of Forgetting, 1880’s


3.4.4. Program Delivery: Metaphors

Metaphors may be considered an integral component of many programs (Bacon, 1983; Gass and Dobkin, 1993; Gass and Priest, 1993; Long, 1987; Priest and Gass, 1993). Long (1987) suggests that the challenges faced in the ‘woods’ “are designed as metaphors for professional challenges in the organization” (Long, 1987:32). As a
form of speech a metaphor may be considered as “a figure of speech ... that associates two unlike things; the representation of one thing by another” (Murfin and Ray, 1997:210). In outdoor and experiential learning a metaphor may be viewed as “an idea, object, or description used in place of a different idea, object, or description, in order to denote comparative similarity between the two” (Priest and Gass, 1997:175). What may be referred to in an outdoor environment as a metaphor may more closely align to an allegory which is “the presentation of an abstract idea through more concrete means. The typical allegory is a narrative ... that has at least two levels of meaning” (Murfin and Ray, 1997:8).

Part of the rationale offered for training business people in the outdoors is the use and power of the metaphors experienced in the outdoors. Bacon (1983) discussed the conscious use of metaphors in the context of Outward Bound programs where metaphors are said to provide the link between the outdoor or adventure experience with the home environment. Bacon (1987) suggests that learning and transference occurs through the experiential metaphors. The learning occurs when the literal experience of the outdoor activity becomes metaphoric, that is an example or similar to another experience. The strength of the metaphor is based upon the isomorphism of the experience - that is the one to one correspondence between the components of the outdoor exercise and real life (Bacon, 1987). Bacon goes on that the isomorphic metaphors result in the participant living two realities at once: the literal and the psychological. The transderivational search which involves making the connection between the two realities, is what ties these two realities together, however the emphasis is upon the instructor “providing appropriate course experiences” (Bacon, 1983:10) to facilitate this process.

Other writers have also drawn on the use of metaphors for the justification of outdoor training. Broderick says that "each of the outdoor events is supposed to represent a metaphor ... For some workplace or life situation" (Broderick, 1989:80), while Handley, when exploring the wilderness experience, says that metaphor "challenges our thinking. It creates a question ... the metaphor is not an expression it is an experience" (Handley, 1992:6). Drawing on the works of Gass and Bacon, it is suggested that metaphors are said to exist where the adventure experience is “similar,
parallel or analogous to occurrences in the clients' daily life at work, home or play" (Priest and Dixon, 1990:104).

Detractors of the use of metaphor, as discussed above include Zemke (1988) and Kolb (1991). Zemke, as discussed earlier, believes that the issue of metaphor is inappropriate and that real training for managers should only take place with real work teams, real problems and real time - not playing in the "woods". Kolb attacks the emphasis on metaphors from a different perspective. He questions the transferability of Bacon's work, which has a psychological basis, to a professional and analytical situation such as the business world. Kolb does not believe that there is a strong correlation between defining one's self-image and relationships, as emphasised in Bacon's work, and the business world which involves strategic planning with many other people and perspectives. Kolb believes that rather than metaphoric change occurring in the adventure training context, that it could be "metamorphic change, i.e. change under pressure" (Kolb, 1991:54). As Kolb suggests that, "metaphors between business and the outdoors should be applied gently and gracefully" (Kolb, 1991:54). Kolb also raises the problematic nature of 'programming' change or learning as any change is a personal thing that occurs on personal timelines, not the timelines of programs or organisations.

Kolb (1991) does raise one very poignant issue, similar to Zemke (1988) with regard to the use and abuse of metaphors - "Kurt Hahn took sailors to sea. Perhaps he would have taken executives to the office!"(Kolb, 1991:53-54). When using metaphors we must be careful and clear. The activities must be clearly introduced, as suggested by Bacon (1987), but probably even more importantly, they need to be clearly debriefed, processed or reflected upon as demonstrated in Doherty's study where specific scripts were written for three facilitation styles in an empirical study of a one day ropes course program for residential assistants (RA). The three styles were: Mountains Speaks for Themselves (MST), the Outward Bound Process (OBP) and the Metaphoric Model (MM). In MST the participants are left to interpret the experience themselves, OBP involves a facilitate 'debrief' after the activity and MM involves a 'frame' or frontloading of the experience (Doherty, 1995). Doherty commented that:

The Metaphoric Model script also emphasized similarities between ropes course and RA experiences, but with this method, a facilitated discussion concerning specific
themes took place before each experience instead of after it. Through these introductions, the instructors structured the ropes course activity to be similar in structure to the job of the resident assistant (Doherty, 1995:13).

While Doherty’s (1995) study focused upon formal facilitation styles, it did not have any focus upon the informal or self-facilitation that may occur without the intervention of the facilitator. Moreover there was no consideration of what other metaphors the participants may have brought to the experience or taken away from the experience given that people come to the program already will a wide range of experiences and understandings (Freire, 1972).

Another critique of the use of metaphors centres on the emphasis placed upon the facilitator to construct or impose metaphors upon the experience. Gass suggests that the facilitator, in addition to their roles as educators, safety officer and group co-ordinator, “must also provide appropriate framing and structuring of the experience for the client” (Gass, 1993). When considering the role of metaphors for the learning of women, Collins (2000) and Mack (1996) suggest that the imposition of metaphors may be derived from Gilligan’s observation “that men speaking of themselves and their lives ... often speak as if they were not living in connection with women” (Gilligan, 1993:xiii). This is related to the predominance of writing on metaphors originating from male writers (Bacon, 1983; Gass, 1993; Gass and Dobkin, 1993; Gass and Priest, 1993; Kolb, 1991; Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Priest and Gass, 1993; Priest and Gass, 1997; Priest et al., 2000). In contrast to work by Priest and Gass, Luckner and Nadler highlight the use of the metaphors generated by the participants as “using participants’ metaphors will help them know they have been heard ...metaphors and stories ... are your window into how people perceive their world” (Luckner and Nadler, 1997:139). When adopting participants’ metaphors the facilitator is honouring the self-directed nature of the individual’s learning and shifting a degree of power into the hands of the participant. Individual metaphors may, in part, be generated as a result of the participant’s self reflection and informal learning as considered later.

Hovelynck (1998) provides a further criticism of the dominant model of metaphor development, as presented above, discusses the difference between metaphors created by facilitators and those enacted by participants. Facilitator-developed metaphors, as proposed by authors such as Gass (Gass, 1993), raises two concerns for Hovelynck
about, firstly, “who’s the agent of learning, the developer of the metaphor, and the second one whether metaphors are primarily looked at as figures of speech or figures of thought” (Hovelynck, 1998:6). Hovelynck discusses the need to create a ‘learning space’ whereby participants are able to enact their own metaphors, i.e. ‘metaphorising’, rather than implementing the contents of the facilitator’s metaphors. This learning space draws on the work of Weick (1995) who suggests there is a need to create a place that is sufficiently open and safe that the participants are able to enact their own metaphors, metaphors they bring to the program and which they realise within the program (Hovelynck, 1998).

These criticisms raise questions as to the role of metaphor in programs and the roles of the facilitator and participants in being agents of and having control over the learning process. These roles of the participant and the facilitator are considered further in 3.4.5 and 3.4.6.

### 3.4.5. Participant Selection and Motivation

There are possibly two major distinctions that may be made regarding participant selection. The first relates to who made the choice about which participants were to attend and the second relates to the relationship of the participants to one another. A third aspect that is worthy of consideration, and which has links to the previous two points, is the level of motivation of the participations to attend and/or learn.

#### a. Who Makes the Selection

Participants who attend CELP’s may be there for a variety of reasons and may have different levels of motivation as a result of the level of choice afforded them in determining whether they should attend or not. Many resistant participants can exist due to being told to be at a training, rather than being given the choice. Choice does not necessarily determine motivation or learning potential as an individual who chose to attend may have done so as much to escape a day or more work, as to learn about themselves, their team or the organisation. However, a positive attitude towards attendance may reduce any early barriers to learning in the program (Delahaye, 2000).
Selection is also connected to process and level of participation in the needs analysis. If not all potential participants are interviewed or if they do not self-identify that they are in need of training, then they may be hesitant to attend an ‘imposed’ program.

b. Relationship of the Participants to One Another

CELPs may be conducted for a variety of target groups. These cover:

- layers within the organisational structure e.g. senior managers
- individuals targeted for individual professional development, this may form part of a succession planning program e.g. future Deputy-Store Managers for a retail chain
- intact work teams e.g. the newly formed marketing team
- individuals attending an externally conducted program, or public enrolment course, with participants from other organisations.

In research conducted by Smith and Priest (1995) addressing the issue of the barriers to transference of a group initiative and team building program the conclusion was that training employees from intact work teams would provide more effective and long-lasting outcomes in the workplace than would occur through a randomly selected group of participants who may face resistance upon their return to the workforce. This may be due to the informal or incidental learning that may occur as a result of the team discussing and recalling the experience upon their return to work (Dickson, 1997; Marsick and Watkins, 1997). In considering the relevance of this research to other programs and organisations the generalisability may be limited due to the size of the sample (n=60) and the length of the program (a one day Corporate Adventure Training program) (Smith and Priest, 1995).

c. Adult Learners and Preparation/Motivation

While participants may vary according to their level of control over their enrolment in the training, there are some aspects of adult learning that may influence what, how, when and why a CELP is conducted. Some of the key insights of adult learning are the belief that adults tend to be self-directed, pragmatic in the learning outcomes and
that they come with a wide range of experiences that, in themselves, are invaluable learning resources (Brookfield, 1988). Smith (1998) cites the work of Knowles who highlights key aspects of the distinctions between pedagogy (the way children learn) and andragogy (the way adults learn). Two of Knowles’ six key assumptions are that:

... adults come ready to learn those things they need to know are able to do to cope effectively with their real-life situations ... the most potent motivators are internal pressures (the desire for increased job satisfaction, self esteem, the quality of life and the like) (Smith, 1998:59).

Kalisch (1979), in discussing the Outward Bound Process, suggests that the process involves “motivated learners ... placed in a uniquely structured environment ... and are given a set of problem-solving tasks” (Kalisch, 1979:19). Kalisch expands upon the need for the learner to be motivated:

This condition must be met to initiate any sort of educational process. The participant must be behaviourally and attitudinally exhibit a willingness to involve himself by interacting in a generally positive way towards his environment. He must believe that something can be gained as a result of his efforts. Without that bottom-line motivation little or nothing will be accomplished in the way of growth (Kalisch, 1979:19-20).

What is not considered in the insights of Brookfield and Knowles above is the role that ethnicity, gender, prior experience and connection (e.g. emotional, cognitive etc.) to the current experience may have upon the learning outcomes. Facilitators do not always have the opportunity to influence, assist or direct the learner’s motivation prior to the program; contract or freelance facilitators may first meet the group on the day of the training, or else they may have the opportunity to speak with a training coordinator or manager. The problem of participant motivation is acknowledged further by Boud, Cohen and Walker (1993) who write:

The meaning of experience is not given, it is subject to interpretation. It may not be what at first sight it appears to be. When different learners are involved in the same event, their experience of it will vary and they will construct (and reconstruct) it differently. One person’s stimulating explanation will be another’s dreary lecture. What learner’s bring to an event – their expectations, knowledge, attitudes and emotions – will influence their interpretation of it and their own construction of what they experience. In general, if an event is not related in some fashion to what the learner brings to it, whether or not they are conscious of what this is, then it is not likely to be a productive opportunity. Much of what we label as ‘poor motivation’ is a mismatch between students’ construction of the event, and our own as teachers (Boud et al., 1993:11).
3.4.6. Facilitators and Facilitation

Facilitators play many roles and can have a significant impact upon the CELP, especially given the expected role of facilitators in the control over the design and delivery of programs (e.g.: Brookfield, 1988; Doherty, 1995; Gass and Gillis, 1995; Heron, 1999). The facilitator can be the authoritarian, teacher, power broker, clown, entertainer, disciplinarian, politician, friend, mother, father or counsellor. As with many terms associated with CELP, the terms facilitator or facilitation has many interpretations as does the skills required of a facilitator.

a. Defining Facilitation

To ensure that appropriate decisions are made about the use of facilitation it is important to be precise about what facilitation is and what it isn’t. Facilitation, as with many terms associated with experiential programs, may be perceived as being used somewhat indiscriminately, and possibly inconsistently, to cover a range of aspects of an experiential program. Conversely, several terms may be used to label the same thing.

Beginning at the dictionary level, at the core of facilitation is the central intent of making things easier or helping move things forward (Crowther, 1995). Heron supports this position in saying that “What I mean by a facilitator in this book is a person who has the role of helping participants to learn in an experiential group.” (Heron, 1989:11).

Gass and Priest when defining facilitation say that: “Sometimes referred to by other names, such as processing and debriefing, we can define facilitation as ‘those techniques that are used to augment the qualities of the adventure experience based on an accurate assessment of the client’s needs’” (Priest and Gass, 1997:174). These techniques at a basic level are considered to include discussion, debriefing, reflection and frontloading. At the advanced level the techniques are suggested to include metaphoric transfer and isomorphic framing (Priest and Gass, 1993). Four years earlier in an article on adventure therapy the same definition was used by Gass to define processing: “processing can be defined as those techniques that are used to augment the therapeutic qualities of the adventure experience based on an accurate
assessment of the client’s needs” (Gass, 1993). A limitation of this definition may be that the facilitator appears to only choose processing or reflective activities for a given program of adventure activities, however the definitions of facilitator and/or facilitation would appear to imply that the facilitator’s role should also include the choice of adventure activities “based on an accurate assessment of the client’s needs” (Gass, 1993), a proposition that locates substantial power with the facilitator, a position consider by Heron (1999) in his model of facilitator styles (Table 3-3) that provides a range of modes across six different dimensions within a program.

Table 3-3 Heron’s Facilitator Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hierarchy Mode</th>
<th>Planning Dimension</th>
<th>Meaning Dimension</th>
<th>Confronting Dimension</th>
<th>Feeling Dimension</th>
<th>Structuring Dimension</th>
<th>Valuing Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plan for the group; direct group’s learning; unilateral decisions</td>
<td>You make sense of what is going on for group; you give meaning to events</td>
<td>You interrupt rigid behaviour; point to what is being avoided</td>
<td>You take full charge of emotional dynamic of group for the group</td>
<td>You structure learning activities for group, design exercises</td>
<td>You take initiative to care for group members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-operation Mode</td>
<td>Plan program with group; negotiate timetable</td>
<td>Invite group members to participate with you in generation of understanding</td>
<td>Work with group to raise consciousness about avoided issues</td>
<td>Work with group; elicit, prompt, encourage views; collaborate in mgmt</td>
<td>Structure learning experiences with group; collaborate in designing activities</td>
<td>You create a community of value and mutual respect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy Mode</td>
<td>Delegate planning to group</td>
<td>Delegate interpretation to the group</td>
<td>Hand over all consciousness-raising about defensive, avoiding behaviour to group</td>
<td>Give group space for managing emotional dynamic</td>
<td>Delegate to group control over learning process; self and peer directed in design of exercises</td>
<td>Choose to delegate affirmation of self-worth to group members</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In earlier writings highlighting the use of several of the facilitation techniques discussed by Priest and Gass above (including debriefing/reflection and metaphors) Bacon makes reference to three distinct ‘curriculum models’. The curriculum models were entitled: Mountain Speaks for Themselves (MST), Outward Bound Plus (OBP) and the Metaphoric Model (MM) (Bacon, 1983). These models cover a range of strategies or techniques that include instruction, activity selection, program design and
group and individual reflection. In referring to Bacon’s article, Doherty labels these same models as “teaching methods” or “teaching styles” (Doherty, 1995:12) which promote the authority and power of the ‘teacher’, as per Heron’s Hierarchy Mode, in contrast to the role of facilitator as helper which may more effectively rest within the Co-operation or Autonomy Modes. Thus in several writings the same techniques have been referred to as processing, facilitation, debriefing, curriculum models and teaching models/styles.

Kalisch (1979) may well have foreseen this definitional dilemma when writing about the multiple roles of the Instructor in the Outward Bound Process. The instructor’s roles were considered to include: skill trainer, program designer, translator, group facilitator and counsellor. In this context the Group facilitator conducted facilitation which was about “making interventions as needed to stimulate and encourage the development of positive relationships among group members” (Kalisch, 1979:83). Facilitation in this case is holistic in the sense that it includes: observing the group process, guiding individuals and group discussions, selecting activities and offering instruction. In Kalish’s model there seems to be a shift between the Hierarchy and Co-operation Modes of Heron’s model, depending upon circumstances. This could raise the question, is an instructor a facilitator?, or is a facilitator an instructor? Or when is an instructor a facilitator?, or vice versa?

Using the analogy of the medical doctor, the doctor is trained and employed as a medical practitioner, but in fulfilling her or his duties the doctor may use skills and/or techniques of scientific analysis, research, counselling, inductive reasoning and plain old guess work, but they are still a doctor. To this end the facilitator of an experiential group may also apply a range of skills and techniques that traditionally may be associated with other professions or vocations and may include, but may not be limited to: instruction, programming, counselling, teaching, entertaining and guiding.

Thus facilitation would involve a broader set of skills that cover not only processing of the activities but also the programming, communication, leadership and instruction. To this may also be added the technical skills required for the experiential, adventure and/or outdoor activities. This would broaden the definition of Priest and Gass above and incorporate some of the observations made by Kalisch (1979) acknowledging the multiple roles that the instructor (of the 1970s) and the facilitator (in the 1990s and

Chapter 3: Immersing in the Literature
b. Skills of the Facilitator

The term 'facilitator' is used here in place of 'instructor' when referring to facilitating the process including the processing or debriefing of the activity as the facilitator is to be "a guide on the side, not a sage on the stage" (Stremba, 1989:9). The facilitator is there to help explore the meanings for the participant, not to interpret the experience for them (Heron, 1989).

Pearson and Smith (1985) seek to highlight the range of skills that are needed by the facilitator of a debriefing or processing session. These skills are: structuring, organising, group process, communication, conflict resolution and counselling skills. These skills parallel those of a professional counsellor or therapist with training as a group leader (Smith, 1986). The range of skills suggested gives support to the view that the debriefing should involve both the thoughts and the feelings, to concentrate on one or the other is to limit the learning. Horwood says that to limit reflection to just the intellect or cognition is to cheat the students, and to emphasise the emotions is just as limiting (Horwood, 1989).

Priest and Dixon (1990) consider the question of qualifications of staff at the service-level of a training organisation and divide these qualifications into three skill categories: hard skills, soft skills and meta skills. Hard skills are the technical skills such as abseiling, rafting and climbing. These skills are considered easy to train and assess. Soft skills are those more related to working with people, including organisation and instruction, these skills are considered more difficult to train and assess. The third category, meta-skills, is what joins the hard and soft skills together. They are the interpersonal skills, the judgement and decision-making, they are considered the higher-level competencies that are quite difficult to assess, and require experience to obtain (Priest and Dixon, 1990). Priest and Dixon suggest that the facilitator especially needs these latter skills.
c. Facilitator Teams

While the total set of skills required by a facilitator is quite extensive, one approach to meet this need is to 'pool' skills by using facilitator teams. In research conducted by Priest (1995b) of a four day CAT program with 71 participants from four intact work groups, three different facilitator teams were established and one control group which did not receive the CAT program. The three facilitator teams where: adventure facilitators, corporate trainers and a joint team of an adventure facilitator and a corporate trainer. It was found that the most effective teaming involved the joint team with the other two teams achieving similar outcomes up to 6 months later in the team development measures. What was not investigated in this research was the potential impact of the skills and personalities of the facilitators and any correlation these may have with the participants. This would contrast with the focus of Priest’s study on the facilitators’ work origins.

3.4.7. Processing, Reflection and Debriefing - more of the same?

As mentioned above, ‘processing’ is one of the components considered integral to experiential learning that may be used inconsistently and/or indiscriminately, however there may be value in ensuring that the terms that are used are well defined and consistently applied. The risk with all definitions is that a definition that is too narrow may become limiting, while an ill-defined term may cause confusion. What follows is an exploration of the dominant paradigm of processing presented in the literature. Questions that will be explored include:

- What is processing or debriefing?
- Why process?
- How do we process?
- Where Do We Process?
- When Do We Process?
- Length of Time for Processing
- Do we need to process?
- Is there a place for Self-directed Reflection?

Dewey sees experiential learning as not just experience but "reflection on experience" (cited in Bacon, 1987:20). The reflection is conducted in order to explore the relationship of the experience, or program of activities, to the normal environment of the participant. There are several terms that are used to refer to the process of reflecting on the experience or the program of activities the most common of these terms are: debriefing, processing and reflection. Horwood says that the goal of reflection is for "students to construct meaning out of their experiences ... (and the) discovery of new connections" (Horwood, 1989:5).

Examples of the diverse and potentially misleading usage of the term 'processing' includes:

Sometimes referred to by other names, such as processing and debriefing, we can define facilitation as ‘those techniques that are used to augment the qualities of the adventure experience based on an accurate assessment of the client’s needs’ (Priest and Gass, 1997:174).

Processing is an activity which is employed for the purpose of encouraging the learner to reflect, describe, analyze, and communicate in some way that which was recently experienced (Quinsland and Van Ginkel, 1984).

Active processing ... is the consolidation and internalization of information, by the learner, in a way that is both personally meaningful and conceptually coherent (Caine and Caine, 1991:147).

Most Debriefings, however, operate on the group process model, using the activity as the central focus of the discussion ... The discussion or processing of the activity can lead to related counseling (sic) issues (Schoel et al., 1988:32).

a. What is processing or debriefing?

The Oxford English dictionary suggests that the chief current usage for the word ‘process’ is “A continuous and regular action or succession of actions, taking place or carried on in a definite manner, and leading to the accomplishment of some result; a continuous operation or series of operations” (Crowther, 1995:546). This series of actions may be natural, involuntary, artificial or voluntary and may relate more to the activities/events that aid in the achievement of learning / understanding from the
experience than the experience itself. It may also focus more on what the learner is doing rather than the facilitator.

Debriefing, a term also used extensively, is often considered an integral component of the experiential process. Within the context of the adventure-based counselling model Schoel et. al (1988) refer to the debrief as a “group discussion period” and suggest that “to debrief is to evaluate” (Schoel et al., 1988:32). Debriefing, or processing, may also be considered a sharing or a reflection. Processing may be seen as a series of activities that aids in the transfer of learning. In contrast Bacon (1983) when discussing isomorphism and successful experiences in Outward Bound programs, says that:

Instructors can afford to be less concerned with discussion and more focused on providing appropriate course experiences ...this does not mean that debriefings are useless or ineffective ... but it must be recalled that a debriefing is itself a course experience ... a powerful debriefing can contribute to generalization, but not – as is normally thought – by helping students ‘understand’ what they have learned earlier. Rather, the debriefing itself is an experiential change process (Bacon, 1983:10-11).

Throughout many of the writings on CELP there is a cry for effective debriefing. Miller (1988) cites ‘debriefing’ as the key process in learning from educational simulations and games (1988:23), while Bank (1985) says that without debriefing a program could become a purely personal adventure (1985:5). Knapp quotes Rhoades who says that "(t)o merely provide an experience, albeit a powerful one, and to expect the student to return home and to sort it out for himself (sic) is, if we are to believe those who are doing research in related fields of education, to invite failure" (Knapp, 1985:14). Despite all of this support for debriefing in one form or another, there is still evidence that courses continue to be conducted without any debriefing process, nor the recognition of debriefing as an important aspect of the training experience (Fields, Naffziger and Dobson, 1992).

While much of the literature uses the term ‘debriefing’, the intent from here-on is to use the word ‘processing’ to describe that effort, conscious or unconscious, by the participant to make sense of the experience and to draw out their learning, whether before, during or after the experience, or at a time and in a place unconnected to the experience.
b. Why process?

Brackenreg et al. (1994) suggest that processing “is widely advocated as an essential component of adventure-based programming” (Brackenreg, Luckner and Pinch, 1994:45) primarily as an activity to aid the transference of the learnings gained from the activity or experience to the more usual environment. This is reasonably consistent in all areas of the experiential learning whether it be for business, schools or adventure therapy.

Through processing there is the opportunity to extract the invaluable data that is generated from an adventure or experiential activity from which the participants are able to learn and to bring about change in their lives. The processing helps to begin to make sense of what has been done, to seek to integrate the new experience into our existing databank of life experiences and understandings. The processing may also provide skills that participants can apply at home to continue reflecting upon the experience well after the program has ended (Priest et al., 1999).

c. How do we process?

i. Common Practice

The most common form of processing revealed in the literature, as discussed in Chapter 6, is the large circle group discussion. This is consistent with the results of Workshop Surveys as discussed in Chapter 5 as well as the dominant images in articles and texts on ‘debriefing’ as discussed further in Chapter 6. Questions used in this model may focus upon the triune structure of “What?”, “So what?”, “Now what?” (Schoel et al., 1988). The primary modality used is the external auditory (Prashnig, 1996) with little attempt to draw upon other modalities. Henry (1999) criticises the validity of self-report and cites work by Nisbett and Wilson (1977) that “showed that people are unable to provide accurate reasons for certain decision, which casts doubt on the ability of people to recognize their own motivation” (Henry, 1999:593). Henry goes on to note that there has been recent interest in approaches that acknowledge the more intuitive and embodied nature of knowledge and experience as distinct from emphasising the rational and cognitive perspectives seen in the existing dominant paradigm.
Another question about the large group ‘debrief’ is the emphasis this form of processing places on the role of the facilitator to ensure the learning happens. It conveys an image of control over learning as distinct from facilitation of learning. Titles of some books and articles, particularly from North America, convey an image of the facilitating being central to the learning process, thus potentially limiting the role and power of the individual to construct and control their own learning. Examples of particularly mechanistic models and titles that emphasise the power and control of the facilitator are:


To move away from this facilitator-centric view of the world may require looking at other modes and methods of processing, ones that incorporate both hemispheres of the brain, are multi-sensory and have the potential to engage people beyond the cognitive level, just as experiential learning itself is meant to go beyond the privileging of the cognitive, rational and verbal. This may connect with Bacon’s (1983) suggestion that ‘debriefing’ is not necessary if the activities/experiences are sufficiently isomorphic or James (1980) that there is potential for the mountains (or the experience) to speak for itself.

ii. Alternative Methodologies

... use review methods which match the fullness of the experience
(Greenaway, 1993:12)

Typically practitioners and writers have viewed the ‘debrief’ as sitting in a circle and having a three stage discussion. This discussion firstly addresses what happened in the game/initiative etc, the next stage looks at how people felt about what happened and finally how does that relate to other situations. Schoel et. al. (1988) refer to Terry Borton’s three tiered approach to this: The "What?", the "So What?", and the "Now What?". This form of debriefing, while possibly effective, does not reflect the diversity of ways that debriefing, processing or reflection can occur. These three phases have also been connected with the last three stages of Kolb’s experiential
learning cycle (Figure 3-2) as well as Priest and Naismith’s ‘funnelling’ (Figure 3-6), both of which present a linear perspective of learning, albeit a circular model for Kolb.

To take into account the variety of needs of the participants in terms of: comfort zones when sharing in a group, their ability to clearly express yourself in words, and their individual learning styles, it is helpful to have a range of methods of debriefing available for use. Smith (1986) draws on the human potential movement and the humanistic education movement to bring together a range of possibilities. These include relaxation and centring, special places, solos, guided fantasy, journalling, dyads and triads, structured feeling exercises and non-verbal group exercises. Stremba (1989) also suggests trip fantasies and journaling and, in addition suggests the use of discovery interviews. The aim is to use many alternatives and to be creative in their use - the more variety available, then the more opportunities will exist for individuals to process their thoughts and feelings and to integrate their learning into their daily lives. Additional methods suggested by other authors are as follows (Boyle, 1997; Dickson, 1996; Dickson, 2001a; Marshall and Reason, 1997; Nadler and Luckner, 1992; Smith, 1986):

- art
- avant cards
- drama
- dyads, triads
- feelings market, place
- guided visualisation
- journals (personal and/or group)
- large group discussions
- letter writing
Henry (1999) provides further examples of the range of personal development media, available to the practitioner, that has some correlation with the list above and with the sensory modality categories (visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, tactile) in the Learning Styles Analysis as discussed below. Table 3-4 makes connections between the media, the modalities in play and the primary realms of application. From Henry’s work, the emphasis upon verbal techniques, as in large group debriefs, reflects a counselling or therapeutic perspective that may not have a place in CELP which may be more about personal development.


### Table 3-4 Personal Development Media

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photo Language</th>
<th>Photos</th>
<th>雕塑</th>
<th>雕塑</th>
<th>Storytelling</th>
<th>Symbols</th>
<th>Thumbs Up/Down</th>
<th>Video Replays</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Word “whip arounds”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thumbs Up/Down</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video Replays</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The setting or environment for processing is not normally discussed. The images considered in Chapter 6 show a range of outdoor environments, but with little comment on the role or significance of that environment. This is considered further in Chapter 6 with reference to material from areas such as human geography and organisational aesthetics. However, given that there is substantial literature around about the impact of nature and the wilderness on people as well as the work of Dunn and Dunn (e.g. Dunn, 1990; Dunn, Griggs, Olson, Beasley and Gorman, 1995; Murray-Harvey, 1994) on the impact of preferred environments, it is notable that there
is an absence of information in relationship to the processing experience. Dunn and Dunn's work considers aspects such as formality of setting, temperature, light and the need for mobility and intake when learning something new or difficult (Prashnig, 1996). Aspects that may be explored further would be to address the question: What is the impact of space, place and nature on the experience, the emotions, thoughts and learning? This question raises its head regularly throughout Chapter 4 as I explore my own learning experience.

e. When Do We Process?

Popular recommendations regarding the timing of the processing is that it should occur after the particular event or activity (Kolb, 1984; Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Schoel et al., 1988). The timing within the program tends to correlate with two models: the first is the military, brief, attack, debrief model which locates the debrief after the particular experience. The second model is the experiential learning cycle that sequences the events in the following order: experience, reflection, processing, application (Figure 3-2).

Heron (1992) strongly critiques Kolb’s experiential learning cycle that he suggests is "derived from scientific inquiry: we reflect on experience, generalize from these reflections, then test the implications of these generalizations through further experience" (Heron, 1992:193). In a scathing summary of his criticisms of Kolb’s experiential learning model Heron says:

Whereas Jung contaminates his four basic functions of feeling, intuition, thinking and sensation by imposing arbitrarily narrow limits on their definitions, Kolb takes his four modes of feeling, perceiving, thinking and behaving as basic, does not define them or augment them, but boxes them into a superstructure of inappropriate epistemology, in order to make them underpin his preferred paradigm of scientific enquiry. He then has to tack other modes such as intuition and imagination, in an unsatisfactory way, onto this structure to make up for its limitations (Heron, 1992:197).

An additional criticism by Heron, of this model is the unquestioned assumption by Kolb that all knowledge is propositional knowledge, and that other forms of knowledge such as experiential, presentational, practical or tacit knowledge are not recognised.
The emphasis of processing occurring after the activity is upon the formal, facilitator directed, processing and ignores the informal and incidental that can occur naturally and at a time and place of choice by the participant. The other aspect that is not given due regard is the impact of power in a group. Heron’s model of facilitation (Table 3-3, page 147) highlights the differences that can occur when aspects such as who has the power and authority in a group process and how that can shift between participants and facilitator enabling co-creation and interdependence of learning.

The impact of power and control is also considered by Miller (1988) who refers to two decisions that ‘debriefers’ can make with regard to any ‘debriefing. The questions relate to the level of structure that can be applied and the degree to which a teacher-centred or student-centred approach is used. These two questions give rise to a typology with four modes of debriefing as demonstrated in Figure 3-7.

**Figure 3-7 A Typology of Debriefing Modes**

![Image](Please see print copy for image)


In this typology, Mode A is controlled but unstructured with little concern for feelings, Mode B is controlled and structured aiming to draw out key learning points, Mode C is non-directed and unstructured, with the participants having greater levels of power and control, while Mode D is non-directed, but structured, primarily by having pre-set questions. These modes, while suggesting that the facilitator/teacher is non-directive, still is based upon the facilitator setting up, monitoring and overseeing the situation, that is, they still retain the power over the participants, and there is no
consideration for participant directed or controlled debriefing or facilitation as may occur in an informal session. The model of debriefing or facilitating promoted by authors such as Priest, Gass, Gillis, Nadler, Luckner and Kolb, as discussed above, typically would fall into Mode B with a high level of structure and facilitator control.

f. Length of Time for Processing

Debriefing can be seen as an add-on to the activity, or it can be viewed as an integral part of the experience. As an integral part, the amount of time allocated to the process may in fact be equivalent to the total time of the activity. Hayllar (1991) suggests that a guide for a minimum time allocation for debriefing is to allow at least one hour of debriefing for every half day of activities. The actual time used will depend not only upon the length of the activity, but also the issues raised in the activity, the willingness of the participants to discuss the issues (this is related to group trust, group dynamics, self-confidence, and tiredness) and the physical environment in which the discussion is occurring (Hayllar, 1991). If processing of experiences includes the formal, facilitated activities and the informal, self-directed and incidental process, may impact upon Hayllar’s suggested length of time.

g. Do we need to process?

Many writings about processing or debriefing strongly suggest that they are essential (Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Priest and Gass, 1997; Priest et al., 2000; Schoel et al., 1988). Yet, if we reflect upon significant learning events in our own lives we may realise that we can and do learn without any particular formal processing activity facilitated by an external force (Dickson, 1997). What we may see from our life-long learning is that some of our more significant learning, or the moment when we make major connections in our mind, may occur at the most inappropriate or obscure times: in the middle of the night, driving along the highway or in the pool swimming laps. These moments of insight may well involve ‘processing’ of information but it is usually in the context of our own parallel processor, the brain, with no external facilitation.

Csikszentmihalyi acknowledges the ability for the brain to operate without an external facilitator when he says:
For many people, driving a car gives the most consistent sense of freedom and control; they call it their ‘thinking machines’ because while driving they can concentrate on their problems without interruptions, and resolve emotional conflicts in the protective cocoon of their personal vehicle (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997:44).

In the context of school-based learning, Caine and Caine (1994) suggest that “as we become more aware of the experiential nature of learning, it will become more important for students to reflect on their experiences to adequately grasp the implications” (Caine and Caine, 1994:159). For Caine and Caine “reflection is a critical aspect of all sophisticated and higher-order thinking and learning” (Caine and Caine, 1994:158).

How can we restructure our programs to offer a broader range of processing methods that reflect the variety of styles, backgrounds and needs within our groups? How can we, or the participants, create the space, the ‘protective cocoon’ so they can reflect in their time and at their own pace?

One of the great risks of conducting any program is the temptation to fall back on previously used program designs. While this is often a very pragmatic decision, it may also be a client requirement where consistency of product or program is required (such as in a multi-program corporate event). However, how well does this reflect the needs of the individual within the program? While activity sequence or location is one thing, the processing strategies may well be something else.

Research and writing from many fields has contributed to the knowledge base that suggests that mass-produced training or educational programs do not reflect the many and varied needs of the individuals in the program (e.g. Anderson, 1995; Atkin, 1996; Chou and Wang, 2000; Curry, 1990; Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993; Prashnig, 1996; Tennant, 1988; Yuen and Lee, 1994). Is it possible to run individualised programs that take into account everybody’s needs? Probably not, however we can be much more intentional in the design and delivery of the program - including the processing methods - to ensure that what we do offer provides the greatest opportunity for individuals to achieve their goals for the program.
h. Is there a place for Self-directed Reflection?

As suggested previously, we can and do learn without the input of an external facilitator, however the facilitator, as the meaning of the word suggests, may make it easier. The stimulus may be an experience, a song, a smell, a sensation. Connections may occur at times when there is less conscious effort being placed upon the problem or the question. The answer may come when we are not looking in that direction as is considered in Chapter 6 with the works of people such as Asimov (1977) and Buchholz (1998).

i. Conclusion

Extracting some insights or learning from an experience is considered essential for inclusion in experiential learning. For some this is called debriefing, for others processing, and for others reflection. The dominant paradigm privileges the cognitive, rational and verbal spheres (typically left brain thinking) while, often, ignoring other realms of knowledge and experience such as tacit, intuitive and embodied. The dominant paradigm also privileges the role of facilitator as the one with power over the experience and the power to generate the learning for the participant, thus decreasing the role and responsibility of the learning. Discussions that follow identify the key questions asked by researchers, the gaps that may exist and the role that addressing experiential learning through the ‘lens’ of learning styles may begin to address the concerns raised in this literature review to-date.

3.5. Research on Corporate Experiential Learning Programs

As discussed earlier, the level of evaluation experiential learning programs is limited and mostly dependent upon anecdotal evidence or small scale quantitative research. This lack of evaluation flows onto the degree of research that is conducted into the area of CELPs. To continue to ignore the need for evaluation and research into the effectiveness of a training method that takes business people into a totally foreign and non-business environment may be deemed almost negligent or at least management malpractice. It is not as if the question of evaluation of training has been ignored in the HRD literature. As considered above in the section on effectiveness, there is a
range of models of evaluation that seek to connect the training needs analysis to the training outcomes at several levels.

The lack of research into the effectiveness of CELPs is raised as one of the major flaws to outdoor training being accepted as an appropriate training tool (Buller et al., 1991; Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988; Kolb, 1988). Easterby-Smith and Thorpe (1997), with respect to evaluation of outdoor management development programs, note that "not only is there a shortage of evaluation, but also the application of traditional scientific research" (Easterby-Smith and Thorpe, 1997:49). Research of any kind seems scarce, a situation that seems little changed from 1981 when it was written that "research on the transfer of outdoor managerial training programs is even more limited. Thus there is a need to investigate the impact and transfer of an outdoor training program to the workplace." (Roland, 1981:7). In searching for research on training outcomes, consideration may also need to be given to the reluctance that some organisations may have in making public their results. While the literature may not show extensive research being conducted, there may be a wide range of unpublished research that is being kept confidential in HRD, researchers' and consultants' filing cabinets.

3.5.1. Quantitative Research

The quantitative research that has been conducted ranges from one day team building programs to multi-day and/or short to medium term programs and with a variety of participants. Participants, as with the time frame, can range from small, such as one person, through intact teams and to whole organisations. The activities can be purely outdoor activities and/or with additional indoor sessions. Some programs are stand alone, while others have structured follow-up processes.

In order to counteract the abundance of anecdotal reports that exist in a range of professional and popular journals (e.g. Arkin, 1991; Bolt, 1990; Boylen, 1992; Collard and Thompson, 1992; Dapin, 1996; Fields et al., 1992; Gahin and Chesteen, 1988; Galagan, 1987a; James, 1996; Prouty, 1991; Schrank, 1994), some call for 'good, solid empirical data' for a basis from which some conclusions can be reached (Buller et al., 1991; Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988; Thompson, 1991). This would seem to suggest
that the only research that is valid in assessing the effectiveness of CELPs is a quantitative, scientific research method. This is an exceptionally limited view of research and potentially demonstrates a lack of insight into the processes involved in experiential learning. As considered in Chapter 6 with the deconstruction of Priest and Gass (1993), the call for empirical research methodologies may reflect a ‘production-line’ view of experiential learning programs.

Roland (1981) did seek to address the absence of research by surveying participants, superiors and subordinates of an outdoor training program, and sought to assess the effect and transfer of three outdoor managerial training programs. The results from the questionnaires, field notes and interviews indicated a positive change as a result of the outdoor training program in nine of the managerial constructs. A problem with this study is that all of the participants in the 3 training programs studied were involved in follow-up supervisory training institutes of lengths between 3 and 6 months:

Two training programs ... were sponsored by one of the organizations that provided its participants with three months of follow-up training. The remaining training program ... also provided its participants with a follow-up training period though the time was six months (Roland, 1981:67)

The impact of this additional training was not taken into account in the research design, nor in the analysis of the results in this research which was designed to “investigate the impact and transfer of an outdoor training program to the workplace” (Roland, 1981:7). The research design was a pre-test, treatment and post-test model, where the post-test administration of the questionnaires occurred on average 71 days after the treatment. As noted by Roland:

This design does not control for history (other change-producing events may have occurred in addition to the training), maturation (the biological and psychological processes which can vary with the passage of time), and testing (the effect of the pre-test on the post-test (Roland, 1981:9)

A question would remain as to whether it was the outdoor training that caused the changes, or the supervisory institute, or, more likely, some combination of the two.

The call for empirical research is also supported by a study by David C. Kolb (1988) who conducted an empirical study on an outdoor education course in a high school. The purpose for conducting this study was to "fill the gaps left by previous research
(i.e. qualitative research), and to obtain the same results in order to give further credence to past work and a valid base for future research" (Kolb, 1988:31). The need for such a study was based upon the suggestion that qualitative research "could not be evaluated using a computer nor can adventure based education take place in a lab" (Kolb, 1988:36). Again, Kolb's research, when looking at a broader category of adventure training, suggests that only empirical research is valid and that anything that may be interpretive needs to be validated by quantitative methods. Even if the quantitative research finds exactly the same results as the interpretive, it is the former which is viewed as the most reliable. This assumption may have been exacerbated by the lack of quality research into outdoor training that goes beyond relating participant anecdotes. Had there been a strong tradition of research in both paradigms the situation may not exist where one research paradigm 'needs' to validate the other.

Cacioppe and Adamson (1988), in reviewing the use of outdoor development programs for managers, agree that the validity of outdoor training programs has not been rigorously validated, but that there is evidence that would indicate that they can contribute to teamwork, and thus to the organisation. What is suggested is that there is a need for more research to "establish the specific benefits of these programs and how long lasting they are" (Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988:92), such as was investigated by Galpin (1989) and who reached similar conclusions about the need for empirical research.

Galpin (1989) sought to investigate the impact of a three day outdoor development course on selected self-perceptions of the participants. The course was conducted by Outward Bound for 64 mid level managers from a hospital. The data collection process was as follows:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>T1</td>
<td>1 month before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T2</td>
<td>Course start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T3</td>
<td>Course end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T4</td>
<td>1 month after</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Tests indicated that there was an immediate positive change (as measured at T3) in the areas of self-concept and 'hardiness' and that this change continued over a four week period. As the research only looked at the 4 weeks after the program there is no indication of the longer term changes nor the actual influences upon the change. The immediate change could be a result of a Hawthorne effect or even the influence of the phenomena identified by Marsh, Richards and Barnes (1986) as post-group euphoria (cited in Miner, 1990:29). Post-group euphoria is represented by feelings of elation and can be a result of participants wanting to make the program look good, the instructor look good, or even to justify the time and money spent on the course. Galpin concludes his study by suggesting that more organisations would use outdoor development courses for their managers if there was "sound investigation which presents results other than testimonial statements from participants" (Galpin, 1989:52).

Miner (1990) also emphasises the need for empirical research to validate the effectiveness of outdoor training. Miner suggests that without "research no foundation of tested and proven facts and hypothesized models anchor the field" (Miner, 1990:2). Without research Miner implies that outdoor (or experiential-based) training would simply turn up its proverbial heels and die, a lost and forgotten technique. Empirical evidence is deemed crucial by Miner because:

... a) ... it can provide strong evidence as to the value of the method, b) ... it can provide practitioners with the tools to improve and... c) ... research can elevate the field to a respectable level of 'seriousness' in the eyes of the academic community, making it a topic for further study by the business, education, management, and social science disciplines (Miner, 1990:3).

Ibbetson and Newell (1996) assessed one provider delivering a two and a half-day 'open' program (i.e. participants are from a range of locations and do not represent work groups that will be together upon their return) to 157 post-graduate students with various lengths of previous work experience. The 157 were randomly divided into cohorts of roughly 30 people which were then divided into smaller teams of 7-8 people who participated in a series of micro (20-30 minutes) and macro (45 minutes to two hours) activities. This research focused upon perceptions of team effectiveness and personal beliefs which did not address any behavioural change upon return which were assessed via a questionnaire and the Team Development Indicator.
Consideration was given to learning styles and team roles, neither of which were considered significant in this study, in part due to the size of the sample (Ibbetson and Newell, 1996).

McEvoy (1997) continues the call for sound empirical evidence to support the view that outdoor management education programs (OME) are effective. McEvoy suggests that the purpose of his paper is to “fill the void by examining the effects of one OME program” (McEvoy, 1997:235). This was to be achieved by providing “statistical assurance that any changes measured were indeed caused by the training rather than some other unknown factor.” (McEvoy, 1997:239). The research design involved a group experimental design combined with some qualitative research methods but the research design was limited to a posttest model due to financial and administrative difficulties. The research concluded that there was a positive influence on participant knowledge, organisational commitment and intentions to implement learning, with ongoing effect for up to three years. In seeking to isolate the training program the research did not take into account the possible Hawthorne effect of the supplementary interviews (two months and three years post), nor the impact of the team organisational days that continued for nine months after the training intervention. The desire for ‘statistical assurance’ is undermined by the weakness of the research design and the lack of statistical significance given the sample size of one case study.

As discussed to date there is a strong and clear call for more ‘hard’ evidence of the effectiveness of CELPs, particularly outdoor training. Too many stories of being in the bush seem to have made people wary of the real impact of such courses. In the move to validate and to develop CELPs the emphasis should not be only on quantifiable evidence, rather the research effort should be seeking to develop strong methods of evaluation from both the quantitative and the qualitative paradigms. To emphasise one at the expense of the other is no better than the teaching process that emphasises the cognitive at the expense of the affective, or the processing that emphasises the intellectual development at the expense of the emotive. Experiential learning, and in particular, CELPs, are holistic processes that seek to develop all aspects of the person, and thus must be assessed by a means that reflects that holistic approach. This does not mean throwing out the dominant positivist paradigm as suggested by the preceding researchers, but it does mean that that “more studies that
use the interpretive paradigm or combine quantitative and qualitative methods within a positivist view will be useful for a comprehensive and critical understanding of experiential learning in the future” (Henderson, 1993:53).

### 3.5.2. Qualitative Research

While the above suggests there is a strong need for quantitative research, on the other side, there is a lack of qualitative research. This may reflect a maturation issue of the profession and the researchers. Maybe in reaching a position of maturity a profession seeks quantitative assurance before having the self-assurance to look to other realms of knowledge and experience as may be found in an interpretive paradigm.

Rowley (1987) provides the contrast between the dominant quantitative paradigm and the emerging qualitative (or naturalistic as he refers to it) paradigm. The areas of contrast discussed include the nature of reality, the relationship between the inquirer and the subject, the nature of truth, the explanation of action and the role of values in inquiry. Rowley suggests that there will continue to be situations where quantitative research is appropriate, but where the area of interest involves "leadership, group dynamics, aesthetic appreciation, environmental ethics, participant expectations" (Rowley, 1987:10) then in these situations qualitative methods may result in more meaningful data. In contrast to Kolb (1988) above where quantitative research was being used to validate qualitative data, Rowley suggests that "qualitative research offers ... another important way to substantiate and bring legitimacy to traditional claims, some of which could not be confirmed employing quantitative approaches" (Rowley, 1987:11). This view is supported by Henderson who says that “if experiential education is only to address the dominant world of primarily white, middle-class, heterosexual, educate males, then the positivist paradigm will do” (Henderson, 1993:53). To achieve other ways of knowing, Henderson suggests that researchers need to see things from different perspectives, such as within an interpretive paradigm. This choice of research paradigm need not be either/or, but can be both/and, with the choice being driven by the question, the researcher, the situation and the ‘subjects’.
3.5.3. Future Research Needs

The evidence suggests that there may be a lack in the amount of research surrounding the evaluation of the effectiveness and transfer of CELPs, or for that matter, any outdoor experiential learning programs (e.g. Buller et al., 1991; Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988). Yet the studies do demonstrate that experiential programs can and do have an impact (e.g. Galpin, 1989; Ibbetson and Newell, 1996; Priest, 1995a; Priest, 1995c; Roland, 1981). There still exist areas that would require further exploration including considering the ‘bridge’ between the program and the home environment, as there is a concern about the ongoing impact of programs (e.g. Roland, 1981; Smith and Priest, 1995). Without a concerted effort to bridge this gap, the appropriateness of CELPs may continue to be called into question. The fireside chats and the experiences of a lifetime will continue to warm the hearts of past participants, they may not sway the pens of funding agencies and human resource managers. Without the support of both quantitative and qualitative research that this form of training is an effective and appropriate means by which to train people (as is indicated by those very fireside chats) these experiences will continue to be no more than a good experience in the outdoors from some individuals. On the flip-side, what the corporate world may also have to do is to have a mind shift away from a purely positivist paradigm to a position that acknowledges that knowledge can be achieved and demonstrated in a range of ways, and not all of them require doing statistical analysis of white males’ experiences! Indicators of what other ways of knowing exist may be gleaned from the discussion of research methods, methodologies and epistemologies in Chapter 2 as well as discussions of educational dialectics referred to in Table 6-5 and experiential knowing considered in Section 6.4.5.

3.6. Learning Styles

3.6.1. Introduction: What Does It Mean?

As with the term ‘experiential learning’, ‘learning styles’ has also suffered from a lack of consistent definition and usage. Claxton and Murrell (1987) highlight this concern over the definition of ‘learning style’ when acknowledging that learning style is used in a variety of ways. These include: to mean something more than cognitive style that
takes into account responses to stimuli in different contexts, certain behaviours that may be indicators of a learner’s response to their environment. This concurs with the first of three problems identified by Curry in her critique of the research on learning styles:

(1) the confusion in definitions, (2) weaknesses in reliability and validity of measurements, and (3) identification of relevant characteristics in learners and instructional settings (Curry, 1990:50).

Some of the problem with definitions may lie in the diverse usage of the term such as an individual’s personal awareness of their preferred style, its use in curriculum design and also in a diagnostic approach to match the two (Guild, 1990). This issue is discussed below in reference to how learning styles are measured.

### 3.6.2. Measuring ‘Learning Styles’

In the educational literature there are numerous measures of learning styles for children and adults that involve self-report instruments, some short, some long, with a range of validity and reliability levels. Hickcox (1995) provides an overview of Curry’s research (Curry, 1983) into the many inventories and summarises the levels of reliability and validity, Table 3-5 has been adapted from Hickcox’s review.

Curry (1983) in seeking to present a model that combines the three layers using the analogy of an onion, where cognitive personality style forms the inner core, information processing style is the next layer and instructional format preference indicator is the outer layer. Curry suggests that by using such as organisation “learning behaviour is fundamentally controlled by the central personality dimensions, translated through middle strata information processing dimensions and given a final twist by interaction with environmental factors encountered in the outer layer” (Curry, 1983:10).
## Table 3-5 Learning Styles Inventories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Curry's Model</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Inventory Titles</th>
<th>No. of Inventory Items</th>
<th>Reliability</th>
<th>Validity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Instructional and Environmental Preference</td>
<td>Canfield &amp; Laffert</td>
<td>Learning Styles Inventory</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dunn, Dunn &amp; Price</td>
<td>Learning Styles Inventory</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Friedman &amp; Stritter</td>
<td>Instructional Preference Questionnaire</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Goldberg</td>
<td>Oregon Instructional Preference Inventory</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grasha &amp; Riechmann</td>
<td>Student Learning Interest Scales</td>
<td>N/Av</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hill</td>
<td>Cognitive Style Interest</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>N/Av</td>
<td>N/Av</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Renzulli &amp; Smithh</td>
<td>Learning Style Inventory</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rezler &amp; Rezmovic</td>
<td>Learning Preference Inventory</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Information Processing Preference</td>
<td>Biggs</td>
<td>Study Process Questionnaire</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Entwistle &amp; Ramsden</td>
<td>Approaches Studying</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hunt</td>
<td>Paragraph Completion Method</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kolb</td>
<td>Learning Style Inventory</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reinert</td>
<td>Edmonds Learning Style Identification</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Nil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schmeck, Ribich &amp; Ramanah</td>
<td>Inventory of Learning Process</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Schroeder</td>
<td>Paragraph Completion Test</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Personality Related Preference</td>
<td>Kagan</td>
<td>Matching Familiar Figures Test</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Myers</td>
<td>Myers-Briggs Type Indicator</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Witkin</td>
<td>Embedded Figures Test</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Leslie Hickcox (1995) 'Learning Styles: A Survey of Adult Learning Style Inventory Models', In The Importance of Learning Styles: understanding the implications for learning, course design, and education, (Eds, Sims, R. R. and Sims, R. R.), Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, p. 30

Tennant (1988), in approaching learning styles from a psychological perspective, suggests that "'cognitive style', 'learning style' and conceptual style' are related terms which refer to an individual’s characteristic and consistent approach to organising and processing information" (Tennant, 1988:89). A task force of the USA National Association of Secondary School Principals defined learning style as:

> ... the composite of characteristic cognitive, affective, and psychological factors that serve as a relatively stable indicators of how a learner perceives, interacts with, and responds to the learning environment (Keefe and Ferrell, 1990:59).

Kolb defines learning styles as:

> ... generalized differences in learning orientations based on the degree to which people emphasize the four modes of learning processes as measured by a self report test (Kolb, 1984:67).
The Learning Styles Analysis (LSA) used in this thesis is based upon Dunn, Dunn and Price’s Learning Style Inventory which, while designed for children, has been adapted by Prashnig and Kenneth Dunn for use with adults and has been issued under the titles of the Working Style Analysis and the Learning Styles Analysis, Corporate (Prashnig, 1996). Curry (1983) suggests that Dunn, Dunn and Price’s inventory has a good level of reliability and validity. The information contained in Table 3-5 highlights the distinctions between instruments assessing preferences for instruction and environment, information processing and personality. Another distinction made in the literature is between styles of personality, cognition and learning.

3.6.3. Issues of Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability in experimental research designs are of major importance (Cohen and Manion, 1994), however in a research design that involves multiple perspectives and methods, a heuristic methodology and an emphasis upon a postmodern theoretical perspective the concept of validity and reliability is of less concern. In fact, as Moustakas (1990) notes that in heuristic research:

"The question of validity is one of meaning: Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one’s own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience? This judgment is made by the primary researcher (Moustakas, 1990:32)"

This contrasts with Grbich (1999) who notes that in the context of a qualitative research design that:

Validity in qualitative research lies in the reader being convinced that the researcher has accessed and accurately represented the social world under study. Reliability is also assessed by the reader and lies in the capacity of the researcher to present a coherent, complete and meticulously checked exploration of all aspects of the topic under investigation (Grbich, 1999:59)

In addition to this distinction, as indicated in Chapter 2, the LSA is not used here as prescriptive or normative, rather it is used as a means of opening a dialogue which can draw upon common language. Grbich (1999) further notes that the terms ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ have come under question:

Should multiple data sources and a tight design be valued above the intensive exploration of one person’s expert opinion? Does a study become more ‘reliable’ if
the views of 200 or 2000 people are collected, rather than of two? What is ‘validity’? Whose version of ‘truth’ is being represented and how? The postmodern rejection of the grand theory as a singular explanation of ‘reality’, in favour of multiple perspectives and the development of small-scale contextual explanations, adds greater complexity to this debate (Grbich, 1999:9)

Further, if this thesis were seeking to generate grand theories about facilitation of corporate experiential learning programs based upon the LSA, then validity and reliability of the LSA would be a central debate. However, as this thesis is not seeking to achieve grand theories, but rather is exploring the topic from multiple perspectives using the ‘lenses’ of personal experience and the LSA, then further discussion of validity and reliability is not important in this context.

3.6.4. Personality, Cognitive and Learning Styles - similar but different?

Jonassen et. al. (1993) define personality as “how an individual interacts with his or her environment and especially with other people” (Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993:5) while cognitive controls and styles is defined as “how an individual interacts with his or her environment, extracts information from it, constructs and organizes personal knowledge, and then applies that knowledge” (Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993:5). Sadler-Smith (2001) adopts a definition of cognitive styles as “consistent individual differences in preferred ways of organising and processing information” (Sadler-Smith, 2001:610).
Furhnam et. al. (1999), in reflecting on previous studies, note that learning styles has previously been considered a sub-set of personality, and also as learnt components of personality while Jonassen et. al. defines learning styles as “learner preferences for different types of learning and instructional activities” (Jonassen and Grabowski, 1993:5). Table 3-5 lists a diverse range of learning styles inventories, but also highlights that there are differences between personality related preferences, instructional and environmental preferences as well as information processing preferences. While these differences do exist, Curry (1983) has suggested there is an interaction between the three distinct layers as presented in the *Onion Model* (Figure 3-8) in the learning process. This model is similar to Miller’s (1997) adaptation of Claxton and Murrell’s work as presented in Figure 3-9. Miller suggests that “as the levels proceed outward, the traits are less stable and more susceptible to changes, and the volatility of the tools for measuring these traits increases farther from the core” (Miller, 1997:1). Sadler-Smith also notes that the work of Curry (e.g. 1983), which may at first appear overly simplistic, is “one of the most significant taxonomic developments in the field” (Sadler-Smith, 2001:609). The distinction between cognitive styles and learning styles, as presented in Figure 3-8 is supported by a study by Sadler-Smith (2001) which also highlighted the independence of cognitive style and personality. Thus, personality, cognitive style and learning style are in fact different.
3.6.5. How Relevant are Learning Style Theories?

From a simplistic perspective, learning style theories tells us what we mostly already know intuitively: we all tend to have our own preferred way of learning. This is not scientific by any means, but an intuitive feeling as one observes children in a classroom, a football team at practice or a management group learning new problem solving techniques. Learning style instruments help us to identify those differences, to label the strengths, offer remediation to those who suffer some deficiency and to adapt instructional methodologies to reflect the diverse needs. However, in the context of management education Reynolds suggests that the use of learning style models is problematic as “learning style theory is highly individualizing, and its psychological perspective, whether orthodox or humanist, ignores or downgrades the role of social context ... [and] takes little or no account of the meaning of difference in terms of social or political process” (Reynolds, 1997:128).

3.6.6. Models and Theories of Learning Styles

The following discusses five commonly referred to models of learning styles. Dunn and Dunn’s *Preferred Environment* (Dunn, 1990) and McCarthy’s *4MAT* (Scott, 1994) draw on research with children, Gardner’s *Multiple Intelligences* (Gardner, 1993a) broadens the concept of learning and intelligence to encapsulate a wide variety of intelligences or strengths. Kolb’s *Learning Style Inventory* (Kolb, 1984) and Honey and Mumford’s *Learning Style Questionnaire* (Honey, 1991) focus particularly on the learning styles of adults. Particular emphasis is given to Kolb’s work through consideration of criticisms of Kolb’s *Learning Style Inventory* due to his influence on the field of experiential learning through the experiential learning cycle. Prashnig and Dunn’s (Prashnig, 1996) *Learning Style Analysis* is discussed in detail in the following section. In the cases of Dunn and Dunn, Kolb and Honey and Mumford, their models include self-report instruments, while for Gardner and McCarthy their theories do not come with prepared instruments, but depend largely upon observation and reflection upon experiences.
a. Dunn and Dunn’s Preferred Environment

Dunn (1990) reflects upon the number of learning styles models that exist and suggests that they are an example of many people recognising the diversity of learning styles that exists between different students and then naming them in ways that make sense to them. The similarities between the models exist because of the acknowledgment of those individual differences, however not all models arrive at the same conclusions. Dunn’s work has been applied in many school contexts, particularly in the USA. Integral to Dunn’s work is the assessment of individual learning styles and then matching of instructional strategies to those learning styles.

The Dunn and Dunn model (Dunn et al., 1995) has been broadly applied in many settings from elementary schools through to college level throughout the USA. This model focuses upon individual preferences for instructional environments, methods and resources. The breadth of this model incorporates many aspects not considered in other models such as those of Kolb, McCarthy and Honey and Mumford which offer a much narrower perspective of learning. Dunn and Dunn’s model purports to identify factors that affect a learner including:

- the environment (e.g. sound, light, temperature and layout)
- individual emotionality (e.g. motivation, need for structure)
- sociological preference in learning (e.g. independent, pairs, groups, with authority)
- physiological preferences (e.g. perceptual strengths, time of day, need for food/liquids and mobility)
- processing desires (including right/left brain, global/analytic) (O’Neely and Alm, 1992:109).

Some of the theoretical postulates for this model are:

- that learning style is an individual characteristic based upon the biological make-up and developmental process;
• these characteristics can vary in intensity; learning preferences matched with instructional preferences may lead to improved academic performance;

• concentrating on learning style preferences when addressing new materials may enhance learning;

• the greater the learning difficulties the greater the need to focus upon learning preferences (Dunn et al., 1995:354).

The work of Dunn and Dunn may be supported by neurophysiology such that the preferences for sound, movement, light and intake may reflect signals from the central nervous system indicating low levels of arousal. The adoption of strategies that reflect learner preferences in areas such as environment, sociological and physiological preferences may act in a similar way as an amphetamine which may otherwise be prescribed for students deemed hyperactive or disruptive (Garger, 1990:64). Thus, there is a suggestion that by adjusting the learning environment to the needs of the learner may result in improved behaviour and increased learning propensity.

A study in 1990 by Curry that ranked the reliability and validity of various learning style models cited by Hickcox (1995) rated the Dunn and Dunn model as having a good level of reliability and validity (Hickcox, 1995). The results of a meta-analysis of forty-two studies of the Dunn and Dunn model indicated that people with strong learning style preferences gained most from congruent instructional strategies, with college and adult age groups gained more than school learners. The impact was greatest for participants classified as middle socio-economic status and where intervention occurred for greater than twelve months, with maths gaining most from learning-style accommodation (Dunn et al., 1995:358).

A study in 1994 of the Productivity Environmental Preference Survey with 423 adult students with 251 retesting a year later found that the model is not conceptually well defined and that the test-retest reliability over 12 months was poor, but for the short term of 8 weeks was fair, this contrasts with the findings reported by Hickcox (1995). In terms of its utility (e.g. administration, interpretation, ‘understandability’ by participants) it was considered to be quite positive. This study raises the question of
the stability of learning styles, a notion not challenged by this writer (Murray-Harvey, 1994).

b. McCarthy’s 4MAT

McCarthy’s work (1990) is based upon Kolb and includes right brain/left brain theories. This work contrasts with Dunn in that McCarthy does not necessarily need to use a diagnostic tool, but rather seeks to look at the curriculum and to introduce strategies across the board that would touch on the various learning styles. McCarthy’s categories of learners are:

- Imaginative
- Analytic
- Commonsense
- Dynamic

Figure 3-10 4MAT System Model

Please see print copy for image

4MAT is offered as a model, not as theory. While there is little research that has been conducted regarding the validity of the model, a large amount of evidence is derived from professional debate and publication (Blair and Judah, 1990; Kelley, 1990; Kelly, 1990; McCarthy, 1990; Scott, 1994; Weber and Weber, 1990).

c. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences

The theory of Multiple Intelligences developed by Howard Gardner (1993) proposes that traditional tests such as the Intelligence Quotient (IQ), Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) have emphasised only two particular aspects of a person's abilities: maths and verbal skills. This emphasis has been at the detriment of others. Intelligence in these tests is seen to be the ability to answer questions, the resultant measure is a static measure of intelligence that is deemed unchangeable over time. In contrast, Gardner identifies intelligence in the multiple intelligences as:

... the ability to solve problems or fashion products that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community (Gardner, 1993b:15).

Gardner's idea of multiple intelligences was triggered by the inadequacies of existing views on intelligence and has drawn upon the diverse and relatively new areas of cognitive science (study of the mind) and neuroscience (study of the brain). From this basis Gardner presents a "pluralistic view of mind, recognizing many different and discrete facets of cognition, acknowledging that people have different cognitive strengths and contrasting cognitive styles" (Gardner, 1993b:6).

An intelligence is defined as "the ability to solve problems, or to fashion products, that are of consequence in a particular cultural setting or community" (Gardner, 1993b:15). There are eight criteria for inclusion as an intelligence:

- the potential to be isolated by brain damage;
- the existence of exceptional individuals who evidence the particular intelligence;
- an identifiable core or set of operations;
- a distinctive developmental history with an expert end state;
• an evolutionary history;
• support from experimental psychological tasks;
• support from psychometric findings;
• susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system (Gardner, 1993a:63-66).

By identifying the individual intelligence strengths of people it is suggested that, as with all learning styles theory, that many more people will learn to a significantly greater level, and with less effort, than will occur with traditional strategies. The seven intelligences suggested by Gardner are:

• linguistic (e.g. poets)
• logical-mathematical (e.g. sciences)
• spatial (e.g. sailors, sculptors, surgeons)
• musical (e.g. musicians)
• bodily-kinaesthetic (e.g. dancers, athletes, surgeons)
• interpersonal (e.g. politicians, teachers, salespeople)
• intrapersonal (e.g. counsellors).

Combinations of these intelligences may be beneficial to different vocations or professions, such as:

• A logical-mathematical intelligence, with strengths in reasoning, calculating and thinking conceptually, combined with linguistic intelligence as demonstrated by an effective use of words both written and oral, may be a strong combination for a lawyer.

• Visual-spatial intelligence shows an awareness of the environment, so combined with bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence may assist in the intricacies of surgery. This combination for a surgeon may be more appropriate with interpersonal intelligence, as characterised by having many friends and great
empathy for others, in preference to intrapersonal intelligence which may come across as shyness, but with strengths as an independent learner in touch with inner feelings.

- Musical intelligence is reflected in sensitivity to rhythm and sound. Musical intelligence combined with bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence, which is characterised by a keen sense of body awareness, may indicate ability as a dancer.

The sixth and seventh intelligences, interpersonal and intrapersonal, may correlate with Goleman’s Emotional Intelligences (Goleman, 1998). Gardner has also proposed an eighth intelligence, this intelligence relates more to the fields of the environment or nature (Checkley, 1997; Meyer, 1997). Each person would demonstrate intelligence across a variety of areas - not the just the two traditional ones. This multi-dimensional view of people would be reflected in the needs of the occupations they pursue which requires a range of skills. Within the realm of management an appropriate general intelligence profile may be someone who evidences strengths in the following range of intelligences: interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic and logical-mathematical. Other intelligences may be applicable as determined by the idiosyncrasies of particular specific professional areas.

Gardner (1993a, 1993b) does not present a model of learning, despite Armstrong’s classification that way (Armstrong, 1994). What Gardner does present is a model of ‘potentiality’ as reflected in the framework of multiple intelligences. The idea of multiple intelligences is that we all have all intelligences, however, what may differ is the degree of competence held in one or more of the intelligences. Previous views on intelligence that have given rise to tests such as IQ tests, SAT and GMAT have implied that intelligence is assessable by focusing upon just the two areas of logical mathematical and verbal-linguistic. This emphasis has influenced the structure of schools, the modes of instruction and the means of assessment (consider that for many people English and Mathematics have been requirements in Higher School Certificates or similar). Individuals assessed by pen and pencil IQ tests as having a low IQ may be deemed less intelligent with little or no consideration for others strengths or talents that they may exhibit in areas such as music, sport or personal skills. With Goleman’s suggestion that effective leaders and managers have a high
Emotional Intelligence (EQ), there may be additional support in the business world for Gardner’s theory (Gardner, 1993a; Gardner, 1993b).

The strength of Gardner’s notion of multiple intelligences lies in the acknowledgment of a range of skills or competencies that are otherwise ignored or devalued in the realm of assessing and accounting for the diverse abilities of an individual. In addition the recognition that people need to be skilled in a range of areas in order to be able to effectively conduct themselves in their chosen profession is also addressed in the idea of multiple intelligences.

The weakness of Gardner’s proposal is well identified in his own writings where he acknowledges that this is not an exact science but a good idea that needs to be further tested and developed (Gardner, 1993a:392). It has no research base of its own but rather draws upon the scientific bases of biological and cognitive sciences and writings in the fields of prodigies, giftedness, normality, special populations and cultural influences. What Gardner proposes may well be termed ‘common sense’ (this is not identified as an intelligence but rather a higher order cognitive capacity) which is defined as the “ability to deal with problems in an intuitive, rapid, and perhaps unexpectedly accurate manner” (Gardner, 1993a:287).

d. Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory

Of all of the writers in the field of learning styles, Kolb (1984) provides what is possibly the most notable work in the context of experiential learning. Kolb not only wrote a significant work on the role of learning styles but also related that theory to what has become a most popular theoretical basis of experiential education, that is the Experiential Learning Cycle. Kolb considers his work a “holistic, integrative perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition, and behavior (sic)” (Kolb, 1984:21). The Experiential Learning Cycle (Figure 3-2), which is a variation of Lewin’s experiential learning cycle (Priest and Gass, 1997), is based upon Jungian psychology and identifies a four stage learning. Given this cycle the most effective learner could be deemed to be the one who operates well in all four phases however Kolb recognises that each individual has strengths or preferences that are identified through the Learning Styles Inventory.
The Learning Styles Inventory highlights the location upon the continuum of concrete experience versus abstract conceptualisation and the continuum of active experimentation and reflective observation. The resultant learning styles are: converger, diverger, assimilator and accommodator. Kolb does not see this learning styles assessment to be static, but rather it is situational and thus the complete learner would be one who adapts and applies different learning strategies to different learning environments.

Figure 3-11 Kolb’s Learning Style Grid

Please see print copy for image


i. Critiques of Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory

There has been quite broad support of Kolb’s model (Heron, 1992), however there has been a number of studies that have challenged its validity and reliability. Hopkins (1993) provides some of the most fundamental criticism of Kolb’s work focusing upon its structural reductionism while trying to explain experiential learning without a coherent theory of experience. Hopkins emphasises the difficulty of representing the intentionality of individual actions through an instrument structured to force the participant to locate themselves within one of the four learning modes (Hopkins, 1993).

Geiger, Boyle and Pinto (1992) sought to duplicate the result of previous studies that identified bipolar dimensions different from Kolb’s, with two learning abilities (Geiger, Boyle and Pinto, 1992:754). In a study consisting of over 700 students, the
findings did not support the construct validity of the revised LSI, but rather two bipolar dimensions running from Concrete Experience (CE) to Reflective Observation (RO) (feeling to watching) and Abstract Conceptualisation (AC) to Active Experimentation (AE) (thinking to doing). This contrasts with Kolb’s finding of dimensions running from AC to CE (thinking to feeling) and AE to RO (doing to watching) (Geiger et al., 1992:758).

Cornwell and Manfredo (1994) also highlight the lack of empirical evidence for Kolb’s LSI, and that the use of an ipsative scale provide no avenue for psychometric evaluation or theory testing (Cornwell and Manfredo, 1994:319). The study attempts to test the propositions relating to the primary learning styles (PLS) of thinking, doing, watching and feeling as identified by the LSI through a combination of administration of the LSI, participation in a ‘doing’ task (origami). The primary learning styles are based directly on the ranking given by the subjects and not the difference between two sets of variables as in Kolb’s LSI. The results supported the existence of the primary learning styles but not the validity of Kolb’s learning style types (accommodator, diverger, converger and assimilator). In addition there was support (within the study’s sample) that the thinking PLS was associated with a higher score of mental ability as measured by the Wonderlic Personnel Test, with ‘doing’ being associated with a higher performance in the origami task and a moderate mental ability. ‘Watching’ and ‘feeling’ styles were more likely associated with lower scores on the Wonderlic (Cornwell and Manfredo, 1994).

Hickcox (1995) cites a previous study by Curry that ranked the reliability and validity of various learning style models. In this study the Kolb model rated as having a strong level of reliability and but only a fair level of validity. Yuen and Lee (1994) also highlight validity as one of three concerns with Kolb’s LSI: the low test-retest reliability, the potential for response bias and also the lack of clarity over the congruence of the LSI with other learning style instruments (Yuen and Lee, 1994). In seeking to address questions of validation, Yuen and Lee sought to test the LSI in a non-Western society, that is, Singapore. Their findings, in general, confirmed the hypothesis that learning style (in undergraduates) is connected to academic discipline (arts, social sciences, sciences, medicine, law and architecture). However they did not achieve the same findings for two academic disciplines (computer science and
business administration) possibly due to failures in their research design (Hickcox, 1995).

Goldstein and Bokoros (1992) conducted a small study comparing Kolb’s Learning Style Inventory (LSI) with Honey and Mumford’s Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ). Their findings suggest that the four learning styles in the four quadrants of the LSI (accommodator, diverger, assimilator and converger) had some degree of congruence with the four dimensions of the LSQ (activist, reflector, theorist, pragmatist). To overlay the two requires a 45° rotation of the LSQ as represented in Figure 3-12. Honey and Mumford’s LSQ is discussed further below. Goldstein and Bokoros’s study did not address the question of which is more effective at measuring learning style (Goldstein and Bokoros, 1992).

Figure 3-12 Rotated LSQ placed on LSI

Each of these studies supports the questioning of the validity and reliability of the LSI, which, with the critiques of Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle as raised in 3.2.6.a, should be of concern to those who freely, and unquestioningly, adopt Kolb’s models.

e. Honey and Mumford’s Learning Style Questionnaire

Honey and Mumford’s Learning Style Questionnaire (LSQ) and the resultant Learning Cycle was developed as a result of dissatisfaction with the validity of Kolb’s LSI...
(Honey, 1991:126). The questionnaire has eighty questions measuring how people prefer to learn and the amount they are likely to learn (Furnham et al., 1999) across four scales: activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist.

These preferences correlate to the different stages of learning identified by Honey and Mumford:

   Stage 1: having an experience

   Stage 2: reviewing the experience

   Stage 3: concluding from the experience

   Stage 4: planning the next steps

Figure 3-13 Honey and Mumford's Learning Cycle

While Kolb’s LSI was an important development base for the LSQ, there are some distinct differences in its construction. As an instrument developed for managers and other professionals, the questions used relate to real life work situations rather than abstract ideas as in the LSI. Secondly, in contrast to Kolb’s LSI, the LSQ locates a person across the four learning preferences opening the way to develop skills in the areas of least preference in order to become an all-round learner. The benefits of adopting this self development strategy (as opposed to focusing on matching of instructional strategies) is that the individual is enabled to learn more effectively from
a variety of experiences and not just those linked to a learning preference (Honey, 1991).

Onsman (1991) discusses the work of Honey and Mumford who provide another perspective on learning styles through their LSQ. Their work is primarily directed towards adult training and, as with McCarthy, is based upon the work of Kolb. The four styles highlighted by the LSQ are the closely linked to the categories of McCarthy: activists (dynamic), reflectors (analytic), theorists (common sense) and pragmatists (imaginative).

3.7. Conclusion

Outdoor management development programs, or corporate experiential learning programs, have a strong history in the realm of experiential learning. They have been offered as a panacea to many ills of corporate life: adaptability to change, finding new directions, improving teamwork, self esteem and leadership skills (e.g. Badger et al., 1997; Beeby and Rathborn, 1982; Cacioppe and Adamson, 1988). The supporting evidence from research of the effectiveness of the programs may be considered scant and often flimsy, with much reliance being placed upon the anecdotal evidence of the training providers or the returning participants. Further investigation needs to be conducted, not only into the area of the effectiveness or transfer of the learning to the workplace, but also what elements may facilitate the effectiveness. An essential component of the program is the processing or debriefing activities that seek to assist in the transfer of the learning. It is proposed that future research needs to focus upon this crucial aspect of the program in conjunction with the influence of the learning style preference of the participant. With due consideration given to the limitations of the work of Ibbetson and Newell (1996) and the lack of evidence for the influence of learning style, it is believed that an avenue exists to further pursue the relationships that exist between the preferred learning style of the participant, the outcomes of the program from an individual and a group level and the preference for different processing activities designed to target the diversity of learning styles.
3.8. **The LSA, After the Fact**

Is the LSA something that can scientifically be demonstrated or is it a bit like reading your stars each morning? Do I look at the LSA and pick those things that suit the *me* I would like to be or are there insights that I can gain from reading it? I suppose one problem is that it is a self-report instrument and that as an adult I may have developed various, flexible learning styles to meet the needs of different learning situations. An example is the following two statements:

You are a talker! When you learn, study or concentrate you really need to interact verbally with other people (Dunn and Praschnig, 2000:6).

There is a lot of self-talk going on in your head! You find it much easier to learn, study or concentrate when you have an inner dialogue about the topic. Rather than talking to other people you might often just like to talk to yourself (Dunn and Praschnig, 2000:6).

It would seem from these that I have a split personality, but as I sit and seek a rational explanation, I can see that at different times in the learning process and with differences in the complexity of material I may have these preferences. I can see that when I am first coming to grips with material I may want to have that inner dialogue, but as I progress I may then seek some confirmation or challenge from others, before returning to my own self-talk. My exploration of my experience of learning becomes the core of the following chapter in my autoethnography as I continue to immerse myself in the experience of learning, moving from the theoretical to the practical. This ‘zooming in’ on the personal narrows the focus even more, a process that will begin to be reversed as the research begins to use another ‘lens’, the LSA, as explored in Chapter 5. The focus is broadened even further in Chapter 6 by using a ‘wide angle lens’ as other literature is explored.