The foundation of experiential knowledge

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This paper is developed in the framework of the Partnership Experiential Knowledge. This Erasmus+ project supports bachelor and master educations in the field of Social Work and Nursing to integrate experiential knowledge and experiential learning into the curricula. In this project, 12 universities in 10 different European countries are collaborating, bringing knowledge together, learning from good practices, developing guidelines, toolkits and training modules. This is done in collaboration with service user and advocacy organisations and service providers. See:
https://powerus.eu/2022/05/19/strategic-partnership-experiential-knowledge/

This paper is one of the outcomes of work package 1: principles. The aim of the paper is to explore the theoretical basis of experiential knowledge. This is important to know what we are talking about. Experiential knowledge has a long tradition and strong epistemological roots.
On the basis of this paper an article focusing on experiential knowledge and social work has been published in European Social Work Research.

Contents

1. Introduction

Although it seems that experiential knowledge as a source of knowing is quite new, its history dates to ancient times. We are actually rediscovering it, thanks to service user and disability movements which used their collective experiences for advocacy purposes, such a better rights recognition and recovery-based mental health services. In the last decades all around the world, people with 'lived experiences' developed themselves into 'experts by experience', using personal and collective experiences to act as advocates or professional care providers. People developed their expertise in different ways, both informally though self-help and mutual aid groups and formally through courses and training programmes, both individually than in the interactions with other people and experiences. In several countries, experts by experience got employed by services and became part of the workforce. In these countries, like the U.K., Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy, the involvement of service users in curricula – mostly social work – became self-evident (Winn and Lindqvist, 2019; Fox, 2020; Happell et al. 2021; Heule, 2021). In the U.K., this is even mandatory from 2003, arranged by law.

Still, there is a lot of work to do to acknowledge the value of lived experiences. Alice Schippers (2021) speaks – following Miranda Fricker (2007) – about 'epistemological injustice', when lived experiences are not seen as true knowledge. Epistemological injustice is not only problematic because knowledge is lost, but it is also morally reprehensible because the individual is not recognized and acknowledged as a carrier of knowledge.

Although there is a growing interest in experiential knowledge from service agencies, educational institutions and universities, experiential knowledge is still regarded as something belonging to the 'special category' of people who have experiences with an illness, a disability and/or service provider. However, we also see, for example in The Netherlands and in other European countries, that there is a growing interest among professionals with a formal education (e.g. social work, nursing, psychology, counselling), to start using their own experiences in their work (Karbouniaris et al, 2021; 2022; Weerman and Abma, 2019).

In this paper we widen the scope from experiences specifically related to illness, disability or trauma, to all life experiences. This means that we consider experiential knowledge to be valuable for everybody, and that anybody can develop this.

Rediscovering experiential knowledge also includes to (re) assess the scientific foundation. Therefore, this paper explores the theoretical foundation of the concept of experiential knowledge. This is also important to characterize and to ground this source of knowledge and give it its proper place among other sources of knowledge.

We first touch on general views on what 'knowledge' is, and how it can be developed. Then we go into the ontology and epistemology of experiential knowledge, and discuss the tension between objective and subjective, personal and collective experiential knowledge. After that we look at the relationship between personal and professional knowledge and at the process through which experiential knowledge is generated. We conclude by briefly describing experiential learning with reference to education, research and practice.

2. The notion of knowledge

The notion of knowledge is already rather complicated, let alone to define experiential knowledge. The notion can be said to be ambiguous due to the many facets that are included in the word (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2001). Wikipedia defines knowledge as the awareness of facts or as practical skills, but also as familiarity with objects, persons or situations. From the Sociology of knowledge perspective, knowledge is defined as "a special kind of belief that people believe is true. To know is to commit oneself to a belief and to commit oneself to the separate belief that the first belief describes an aspect of reality. Thus, there are two aspects to knowledge: the commitment-factor and the truth-factor" (Kurzman, 1994, p.268).

Many books and article are written, studying and theorizing different aspects of knowledge (Bolisani & Bratianu, 2018; Ichikawa & Steup, 2018). It is the primary subject of the field of epistemology, which studies what we know, how we come to know it, and what it means to know something.

For centuries, philosophers debate about the nature of knowledge. One of the issues is when knowledge is true, and how this can be substantiated or justified. It concerns the question if knowledge is something more than mere true belief. Ancient Greek philosophers regard knowledge as a manifestation of virtues or as wisdom. Many religions hold that God, the divine or holy books are the main source of knowledge and that humans should seek knowledge from there. This is often referred to as 'higher knowledge'. So, how knowledge is constructed, defined and valued differs over time. It depends on cultural, spiritual and scientific views that change over the centuries. This also shows that knowledge is not something static, but that it is a dynamic concept. The theory of social constructivism states that knowledge is always socially situated and that is constructed through interaction with others. To social constructivists, knowledge is also a human product, and is socially and culturally constructed (Gredler, 1997; Prawat & Floden, 1994). In this view, knowledge is always contextual, so gets its meaning in specific situations.

In the natural sciences, knowledge is acquired using methods like repeatable experimentation, observation, measurement, data collection and data analysis. Another way of looking at knowledge is to see it merely as information, or as quantitative data. The Grounded Theory attests that the knowledge production occurs in a constant dialogue between the theoretical and the pragmatic, incorporating both method and methodology to produce knowledge that is not a final version for all time but is capable of modification (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

In our era of 'big data', many processes of production and policy making are based on this type of data analysis. We have entered a stage that knowledge production is taken over by computers, applying algorithms that can even be auto generated. This has never seen before in the history of humanity, risking that technology is taking over human agency. If these types of information are only regarded as the 'true knowledge', the other forms of knowledge and knowledge acquisition are ignored. In this sense, experiential knowledge can be regarded as a return to ancient conceptions of knowledge.

Dimensions of knowledge

We can visualize conceptions of knowledge on two different axes: subjective versus objective and personal versus collective. Personal knowledge is the knowledge embodied in you as an individual. It may comprise of all kinds of subtypes of knowledge, both subjective and objective. This knowledge can sometimes be hidden inside the person, which is often referred to as *tacit knowledge*.

Dimensions of knowledge
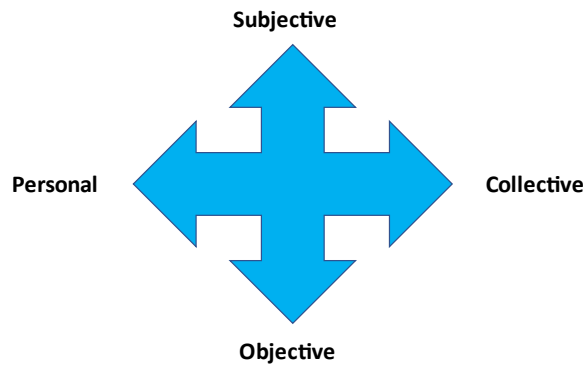
When knowledge is shared among people on a larger scale, there is a need for validation: can this knowledge be seen as valid and true? It is also a matter of acceptance. The question can be asked if this knowledge can be used for a general purpose that serves a common good. If this is granted, the knowledge may be accepted as collective knowledge. The addition 'common good' is important in the light of recent debates about 'fake news' and 'alternative facts'. In a polarised society with a lot of mistrust, people don't know what to believe anymore, and although empirical evidence may proof that certain information (knowledge) is correct or not, people may perceive it differently, and invent their own truth.[1]

We can also add another dimension, making a distinction between 'everyday' and 'deep' knowledge Everyday knowledge can be regarded as practical knowledge, knowledge that is used for managing everyday life. It is for example about how a device works or how to maintain a daily routine. Deep knowledge is concerned with underlying meanings and principles. It is related to emotions and feelings, with values and life experiences. But deep knowledge can also be about scientific theories that explain certain phenomena, or form the structural basis for technical innovations. Deep knowledge often provides insights in key concepts, in 'the bigger picture'.

Dimensions of knowledge
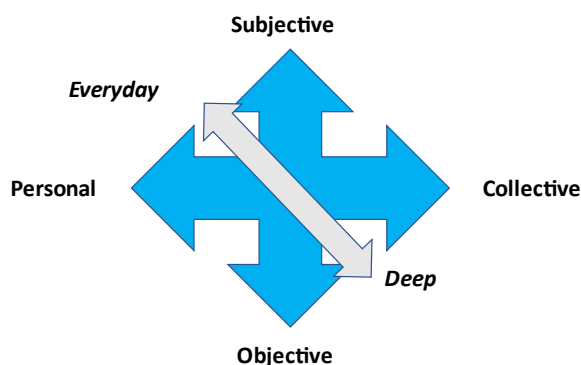
In reality, there are no strict boundaries between the different types of knowledge. Everyday knowledge can be deepened, for example by connecting daily activities to meaningfulness. Subjective knowledge can be objectified if for example research shows that many people share the

[1] Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995, p. 58-59) state that "[knowledge is] a dynamic process of justifying personal belief towards the 'truth'." and "...is anchored in the beliefs and commitments of its holder."

same type of experiences. In this example, personal experiences can be turned into collective knowledge.

Propositional and procedural knowledge
Another complex distinction that is made is propositional knowledge and non-propositional knowledge (Klein, 1971; Moser, 1987). Propositional knowledge is also referred to as descriptive knowledge: 'knowing that'. It refers to knowledge about facts, either based on empirical evidence or on personal observations. For non-propositional knowledge (also called Procedural knowledge), no essential relation to a proposition is involved. The two most well-known forms are 'knowing how' (know-how or procedural knowledge) and relational knowledge. The term "know-how" refers to some form of practical ability or skill. Knowledge is then connected to a corresponding competence. Examples include knowing how to ride a bicycle or knowing how to play the guitar. It is possible to know all of the theory behind riding a bicycle (to have all of the relevant propositional knowledge) without actually knowing how to ride a bicycle (without having the procedural knowledge). Relational knowledge refers to familiarity with an individual that results from direct experiential contact. It often concerns a relation to a person. You know the person, for example you are familiar with his history, ideas and characteristics. Related to this is the idea of *self-knowledge*, that refers to a person's knowledge of their own thoughts, beliefs, emotions and capabilities.

3. Knowledge production

The 'production' of knowledge occurs through a process, and can be produced in many different ways. For individual knowledge development, the most important source is perception, which refers to the usage of the five senses. Many theorists also include introspection as a source of knowledge (Gibbons, 2019), especially for self-knowledge (Myers, 1986). Other sources often discussed include memory, rational intuition and reasoning.

It is obvious that knowledge can only develop through all kinds of learning processes, from imitation in early childhood to analytical and conceptual thinking later on. A technical picture of knowledge development sees it as a process of input, throughput and output. On a collective level knowledge is co-produced through human interactions, formal and informal learning, research and development. In this case, when people discuss to each other's experiences, emerges an experiential knowledge of higher caliber, a meditated point of view that expresses the shared experience and, therefore, becomes 'inter-subjective': a worth that, although different from the objectivity of science, it is something other than just the contingent subjectivity (Folgheraiter, 2004). The relational dimensions support the production of knowledge (even if it's individual knowledge). We could speak about intersubjectivity as the relation or intersection between people's cognitive perspectives.

Davenport and Prusak (1998, p. 5) say that" Knowledge is a fluid mix of framed experience, values, contextual information, and expert insights that provides a framework for evaluating and incorporating new experiences and information. It originates and is applied in the minds of knowers. In organizations, it often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, practices, and norms."

Learning about personal knowledge can bring tacit or intuitive knowledge to the open. This requires the cognitive ability to become aware of what's is hidden inside, and to reflect on this. To use this knowledge (in terms of applying it in activities and roles and sharing it with other people) requires (to develop the) transferring competences. These are for example communication skills, and knowing how to apply knowledge in specific situations. We also call this 'action knowledge' (Goldkuhl, 1999).

To the knowledge production is also important contexts, factors and conditions that facilitate or not the development of open processes of discovering, creation and reflection, at individual and collective levels, but also at organizational level (for example in social welfare institutions).

4. Ontology and epistemology of experiential knowledge

As we mentioned in the introduction, the origin of knowledge, already in ancient times, was the experiences of people. Based on these experiences, people learned and developed different types of knowledge. In recent decades, knowledge has often been reduced to statistical, theoretical or technological knowledge. Professional knowledge is traditionally developed, acquired and transferred within an established propositional tradition of knowledge that is passed on in a profession or an academic discipline. We are now turning back to what has been neglected, acknowledging its value, and integrating it with other types of knowledge.

In the following sections, we explore the ontology and epistemology of experiential knowledge. Then, we describe how experiential knowledge can be developed.

One of the first authors -in our times- that has written about the subject is Thomasina Borkman. In her article from 1986, she describes it as 'a new concept for the analysis of self-help groups'. She defines experiential knowledge as 'truth based on personal experience with a phenomenon'.
She contrasts this with "truth that is acquired by discursive reasoning, observation, or reflection on information provided by others" (p 446).

Analysing how self-help groups work, she discovered that the two most important elements of experiential knowledge are (1) the type of "information" on which it is based and (2) one's attitude toward that information. She classifies the type of information as reflected wisdom and know-how gained from personal participation in a phenomenon. "This wisdom and know-how tend to be concrete, specific, and common sensical, since they are based on the individual's actual experience, which is unique, limited, and more or less representative of the experience of others who have the same problem."
The second critical element is the certitude that what one experiences becomes indeed knowledge. Thus, the term "experiential knowledge" denotes a high degree of conviction that the insights learned from a situation are truth, because the individual has faith in the validity and authority of the knowledge obtained by being a part of the phenomenon (p.2). Self-help groups are a model of sharing experiences and creating a shared body of (experiential) knowledge, which can be used for the benefit of the participants.

Borkman argues that experiential knowledge can form a counterweight to the dominance of professional knowledge. She acknowledges however that both sources are valuable and are more powerful if combined. The point however is that professional and scientific disciplines tend to hold on to their authority and power positions following knowledge hierarchy. Borkman states: "Conflict occurs when there are competing sources of authority about the same phenomena" (p 448). What we need is thinking in complementary terms, avoiding antagonistic representations that disempower learning processes and systems.

5. From experiences to experiential knowledge (through experiential learning)

We already described that (practical) knowledge develops itself through experiential learning processes. Experiences in itself can be processed unconsciously and even may evoke an instinctive or automatic response. If you are confronted for example with a sudden threatening situation, the automated response will be to protect yourself. There is a direct action, without reflection but this is not knowledge. Also in social work, practitioners are usually exposed to a huge number of situations and experiences, and this represents a great potential to develop experiential knowledge useful for practice. Therefore, living experiences and learning from experiences is very different. The amount of learning is not directly linked to the amount of experience. It's not only a matter of exposure to experiences. Learning in these situations usually takes place after the event, when the emotional arousal has decreased. In the brain, there is space to reflect on the event: what has happened, how did I react, and how do I evaluate my response? Experiences often have affective (emotional) and factual elements. So immediately both subjective and objective dimensions are there. Emotional experiences are often evaluated through the lens of rationality. This is how we process experiences, give it a place in our life, and learn.

One could say that experiential knowledge is the result of learning from experiences, or in other words 'learning by experience'. This is related to the concept of experiential learning, as developed by Kolb and others (see the section about experiential learning; *not yet written*).
Experiential learning requires a certain degree of consciousness and certain cognitive abilities, such as reflection. This implies that not everybody is able of experiential learning to the same extent, for at least two main reasons: a lack of experiences, a lack of critical elaboration on the experiences that allows to be aware of what you learned from those experiences (at cognitive and emotional level). Experiential learning is in fact a higher form of learning.

> This raises the question to what extent people with cognitive impairments can learn from their experiences. Research, for example with people with intellectual disabilities, indicates that they may use adaptive forms of learning. These are often based on 'what works' principles. People experience what works (e.g. what gives pleasure, provides safety) and attune their behaviour accordingly. You might say that these are forms of situated learning. This implies that it is sometimes difficult to transfer knowledge to another context. What works for example at home will not work at the community centre, so there relearning should take place. About this, it's important to consider the particularistic nature of social work: what works for a person in terms of interventions cannot working for another who is living a 'similar' situation because life problematics can be similar but never the same in essence.

Experiences often involve multiple senses and different cognitive processes, e.g. there are emotional, behavioural and cognitive dimensions. Experiences could be planned, so intentional, or spontaneous. So, by default, there is a lot of variation. This makes experiential learning a rich source of knowledge.

We can summarize different aspects of experiential knowledge as follows:
- Experiential knowledge is dynamic. It is constantly evolving (and should remain so in order to keep learning going) (Van Hoorn, 2018)
- Experiential knowledge is contextual. This involves both the personal context (e.g. personal history, personality) as the social context (e.g. social environment). It may also involve, experiences with care institutions and other systems)
- Experiential knowledge includes tacit knowledge / embodied knowledge / implicit knowledge, intuitive knowledge (Castro et al, 2018)

- Experiential knowledge includes the subjective and affective. It is deeply connected with facts, emotions and perceptions on life.
- Experiential knowledge represents a 'phenomenological-existential perspective' (Weerman, 2016; derived from Merleau-Ponty).

Ontologically, experiential knowledge can be mostly situated in the following frameworks:
- Bounded realism: constructions of reality are acknowledged in the context of personal experiences, time and space.
- Relativism: realities exist as multiple, intangible psychological and social constructions.
- Constructionism: meaning is created in the interplay between subject and object; subject creates reality of object.
- Subjectivism: meaning exists within the subject.

Experiential knowledge has its own characteristics, opposing to positivistic forms of knowledge, that are more based on 'objective scientific' ways to understand reality, like structural realism (Ladyman, 1998) and critical realism (Cruickshank, 1993).

Epistemologically, how knowledge is created, we can position experiential knowledge in the framework of constructionism and subjectivism. Meaning is created from interplay between the person (subject) and the fact, the situation that occurred (object) and exists within the subject or among subjects. This raises the question whether experiential knowledge is strictly personal or individual knowledge, or that it can be transformed into general or collective knowledge.

6. Collective experiential knowledge
From the perspective of the ontology and epistemology of experiential knowledge, it seems difficult to transfer individual experiences into a collective body of knowledge. An important principle is that personal experiential knowledge can never be the same as collective experiential knowledge. Personal or 'lived' experiences belong to the person and should remain intact as they are. However, part of this knowledge can resemble the experiences and knowledge of other people, and bringing this together can be useful, both for the empowerment of the individual as for a broader purpose. We further consider that beyond resembling processes, when more lived experiences are shared, the individual experiential knowledge can be wider or also change because it has been revisited in the light of others. This contact has not only a binding force for creating collective experiential knowledge, but also a transformative one for the individual. To give an example, when service users share with other service users their direct negative experiences with social workers, helping professionals or welfare services, in some cases they can revisit it for the better giving to those experiences new meanings.

> In a Swedish research project, the way knowledge was collectivized in service user movements was studied (Naslund, 2020). Collectivizing has a number of benefits for the individual. Naslund identifies that sharing personal knowledge leads to acknowledgment and validation. This happens when others in the group see similarities with their own experiences. Since emotions in personal narratives are often an integral part of the experiences, emotional affirmation is an important aspect of the acknowledgement. On a collective level, bringing experiential knowledge together can serve different functions, like mutual support for dealing with problems and advocating for better services, for developing a community work project or informing social policies. So collective knowledge informs self-help initiatives and political actions. In order to turn experiences into action, Naslund remarks that other types of knowledge are needed, for example capacities how to apply the knowledge in institutional frameworks, like service organisations, government and politics. A

big task is how to convince others about the credibility of the knowledge and how to create impact.

We still have to learn a lot about how to co-produce and turn (part of the) personal knowledge into collective knowledge, creating also a feedback loop, since personal knowledge will also be enriched (or even altered) by using collective knowledge as a resource. It seems that we need environments and interfaces, such as learning communities, self-help groups, and appropriate codesign and research methods.

In a Dutch study on a project integrating attention for lived experiences in the curriculum of social work, students who experienced mental health issues joined a peer support group (Karbouniaris & Wilken, 2020). Another group of students shared experiences of caring for a family member with a disability or chronic illness. The next step is to learn how to use personal experiences - of any kind - in a professional context.

Over the past decades numerous scientific studies have been conducted collecting lived experiences and turning this into collective knowledge. An example are studies about recovery of people who faced trauma and mental health problems (Wilken, 2010; Leamy et al, 2011). These studies offer insights about patterns in processes and factors that hinder and facilitate recovery, including how professionals can support personal recovery. Consumer and disability movements show that bringing together experiences, and turning those into collective evidence, can lead to empowerment and the acknowledgement of human rights. Examples are the American with Disabilities Act and the UN Convention on the Rights of People with a Disability. So, personal and collective knowledge can be put into action. In order to do this, other types of expertise is needed, like presentation and communication skills.

We can distinguish different types of expertise:
1. Knowledge about what can happen to your body, mind, behaviour and your life (in relation to disruptive experiences, psychological disorders, chronic illness, physical or mental disability, addiction, poverty, debt, social isolation, discrimination on based on skin colour, origin, religion, etc.).
2. Knowledge about options how to cope with these experiences.
3. Expertise in dealing with care providers and institutions. And based on this: contributing to system changes.
4. Expertise in dealing with societal reactions. For example, how to deal with reactions from your social network, with stigmatization and exclusion, how to prevent exclusion and how to realize participation.
5. Expertise in working with peers, how you can support others and each other (based on, for example, knowledge about recovery processes and recovery factors), whether in formalized frameworks such as mental health care, addiction care, self-help and recovery groups.

The personal capacity to use experiential knowledge becomes stronger if lived experiences have been processed, shared with others, connected to descriptive and explanatory frameworks, and skills have been acquired to apply the knowledge to a variety of personal and institutional contexts.

7. Professional knowledge
We define professional knowledge as the knowledge that is needed and used for executing a professional role and the tasks connected to it.. In our view, professional knowledge consists of theoretical, methodical, and experiential knowledge.
A social worker uses for example theoretical knowledge about psychology, sociology and change theories. A nurse uses knowledge about physiology and anatomy. Both professionals, sometimes

unaware, act expressing a paradigm, an approach, a methodology (or more) and techniques. Practical knowledge is about the methods you can use to serve clients or patients. A social worker may use strength-based approaches, and a nurse a protocol for wound care. Working professionally means to work in a ethic, systematic, effective and goal-oriented way. You combine 'knowing what to do' with 'knowing how to do', and also with 'why you do it', imagining the consequences of your choices and actions; so practical knowledge is also about the skills to apply a certain intervention.

Professional knowledge develops itself over time, starting with professional education, followed by experiencing different situations and learning, sometimes from mistakes, trial and error. Learning from experiences, using mechanisms like critical thinking and critical reflection (Askeland and Fook, 2009), introspection and peer supervision are essential. Explicitly using personal experiences as a source of learning and development is an essential complement to theoretical and methodical knowledge.

> We consider the integration of personal experiences into the professional body of knowledge to be a cornerstone of professionality. These experiences (leading to personal, tacit or embodied knowledge) constitute your personhood, the self, which is also your core as a professional. Personal experiences are a valuable source of knowledge, both for personal as well as for professional development. We don't reserve experiential knowledge for a specific situation or condition. Experiential knowledge can arise from any kind of experience, either positive or negative, anywhere during life. However, most knowledge will arise from experiences that either have a certain emotional of physical impact (also positive), or have developed during a longer period of time.

Personal experiential knowledge can already be cultivated during the initial professional education, acknowledging this as a valuable source. Also, learning from the experiences of other students and teachers is important. And adding what you can learn from people who have specific experiences, with a disability, a trauma, an illness, an addiction, homelessness or poverty, and with service systems, turns out to be very valuable (see the many examples in Driessens and Lyssens-Danneboom, 2021).

Both students, graduated professionals and service users can turn personal experiences into knowledge and learn how to combine this with other capacities to apply this in professional and other roles. The ways how to do this are collected and developed in the Erasmus+ project *Experiential Knowledge in Higher Education* currently going on.


8. Experiential learning

Experiential knowledge and experiential expertise can be acquired through experiential learning. This form of learning already has a long tradition, with its roots in the work of Paolo Freire (1972), David Kolb (1984) and others. Around 350 BC, Aristotle already wrote in the Nicomachean Ethics: "for the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them".[8] But as an articulated educational approach, experiential learning is of much more recent vintage. Starting in the 1970s, David A. Kolb developed the modern theory of experiential learning, drawing heavily on the work of John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget. From a pedagogical perspective, several studies shown that experiential learning is effective in social work education (Frank, et al., 2019; Segal, 2007; Timm et al., 2011).

Experiential learning can be seen as a process in which insights (knowledge) are continuously derived from, tested and modified by experiences that a person gains. This happens in interaction with the

environment, through human relationships, thus all the things that occur in your life in different life domains. Experiential learning has four elements:
- The descriptive side of the experience (event, situation etc.)
- The subjective side of the experience (how the experience is perceived, including feelings and emotions)
- Reflection: reflective observation; reflection on both the concrete and the subjective side of the experience. You abstract the experience to get an understanding of why and how experiences happen, and how you react on these, so it is about finding interpretations and explanations. This leads to insights (knowledge).
- Active experimentation: using the insights for personal development or other purposes. For example, this knowledge can be used to improve personal functioning and well-being, to cope better with specific circumstances, to develop skills and talents. It can also be used in professional areas, like work and education. The involvement of experts by experience in social work education is based on this principle who allows the EBE to share an experiential knowledge that is crucial to develop the professional knowledge in social workers or nurses to be.

All the elements above are important. Learning develops in a cyclic way. This is also known as David Kolb's cycle of learning (Kolb, 1984, p. 21).
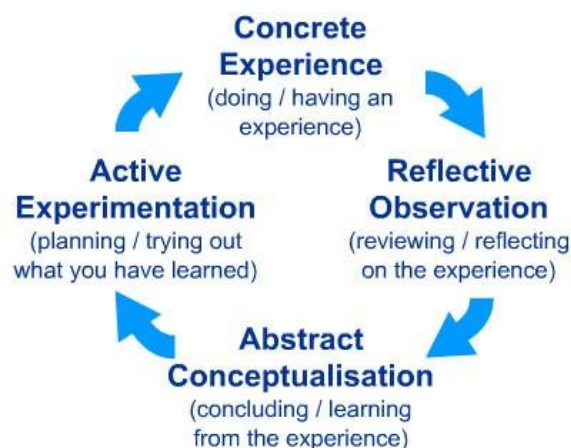
Most people learn the most by doing. But the crux in this model is that reflecting and learning from the experience must occur, followed up by applying what has been learned. A related form of learning is *action learning*. In education we also use similar concepts like *service learning*, *practice learning*, *situated learning* or *contextual learning*.

One might criticize Kolb's model at two points. One is that he seems to emphasise rational thinking, thereby ignoring the subjective, emotional aspects of experiences. The other is that he assumes that a person needs to have the cognitive abilities to reflect and to conceptualise. Considering that having limited cognitive skills doesn't mean not having at all, we know that also persons who have cognitive impairments are able to learn from their experiences. They might use more active experimentation with less emphasis on reflection and conceptualisation.

9. In conclusion

In this paper we showed that experiential knowledge has a long history as well as a sound scientific base. Restoring it as a valuable source of knowledge, besides other sources, will enrich educational and professional practices. The Erasmus+ project *Experiential Knowledge in Higher Education*, is meant to support this development.

In conclusion, we can summarize some basic assets of experiential knowledge:
1. Experiential knowledge is a valuable source of knowledge and complements other sources of knowledge, such as theoretical knowledge and methodical knowledge.
2. Everybody has personal experiences and can turn this into experiential knowledge.
3. Experiential knowledge has its own ontology and epistemology; this must be acknowledged and respected.
4. Experiential learning suits well the development of experiential knowledge.
5. Sharing personal experiences with others contributes to the quality of relations and to social inclusion, and supports personal and professional development.
6. Collectivisation of experiential knowledge can be used as a learning source for personal and professional development.
7. The specific experiential knowledge of people with illness, disability, family care or service providers is a valuable source of learning. Involving these 'experts by experience' in the programme offers students the possibility to learn from their experiences and knowledge.

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