
Utilizing Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory to Implement a Golf Scramble

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Abstract

This study introduced how Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory was used across the four-mode learning cycle of abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, concrete experience and reflective observation as a pedagogical tool for implementing a golf scramble. The primary research question was to see whether Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory four-mode learning cycle was an effective means for implementing a the golf scramble. The participants of the experiential learning experience were twenty-three (N=23) students from a 16-week sport event management course who planned, organized, led, and implemented the golf scramble. The Golf Scramble was evaluated across three different surveys including the Student Opinion of Instruction Survey (SOIS), the University Course Climate Survey (UCCS), and the Golf Scramble Participant Survey. The result of the study indicated that instructional strategy was important in the abstract conceptualization and concrete experience (M=4; SD=.95). The students also supported active experimentation and reflective observation as they stressed the importance of the real life experiences they took from the course. There were multiple benefits of utilizing Kolb's Experiential Learning Modes Cycles in the classroom that can be expanded to other areas within sport management pedagogy as well as related fields.

Keywords: experiential learning experience; kolb's experiential learning theory; golf scramble

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Introduction

Educators within sport, recreation, parks, and tourism disciplines have recognized the need to balance a student's theoretical knowledge with practical experience (Bethell, 2011; Byrd, 2009; Judge, Pierce et. al, 2011; Ruhaneu, 2005). Researchers have studied active learning and found that mental engagement allows students to process knowledge, skills and concepts to construct an understanding where meaning is made and learning is internalized (Koza & Marckette, 2008; Pierce, Petersen, & Meadows, 2011; Turesky & Gallagher, 2011). However, in many classrooms it is not uncommon to see students taking a passive role in learning because instructors employ mainly traditional methods of teaching such as lecturing, note-taking, and the use of multiple choice and/or true-false exams (Wingfield & Black, 2005). These traditional methods of passive teaching lend itself to instructor-centered as opposed to the active teaching method focused towards student-centered learning (Wingfield & Black, 2005). Finding the balance between theoretical knowledge and practical experience has created a systematic change in pedagogical methods that better prepare students to apply "broad-based theoretical education" as well as an education grounded in "technical, experiential skills" (Herreman & Mulch, 2003, p. 66). Although there are many academic disciplines that attempt to find a balance between theoretical knowledge and practical experiences, sport management is a discipline that requires this type of teaching pedagogy.

Following graduation, sport management students are required to have a high level of skills related to leadership and group facilitation upon graduation. The demand for high leveled skilled sport managers became apparent in the 1980s when sport professions began to prosper (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2012). Although there were similarities between business and running a sport organization, there were also intricacies peculiar to the sport industry. This need led to the formal study of sport management (Masteralexis, Barr, & Hums, 2012). One pedagogical method of active learning that supports sport management students is to incorporate experiential education into a variety of courses (Byrd, 2009; Canberg, 2009; Judge et al., 2011; Miller, Meaney, & Podlog, 2012; Pierce, Petersen, & Meadows, 2011).

The results of the supporting studies provided a set of reasons to why experiential learning experiences are important to students preparing for a job in event management.

First, the experiential approach to teaching event management allows to perform through planning, organizing, leading, and implementing a “real” event, which is a powerful and meaningful way to teach students about managing events. Second, students learn intricate details of event planning and management as well as ways to deal with the unexpected. Third, the experiential learning experience may provide an opportunity for some students to gain confidence in their ability to solve problems in their skills as an event planner. Finally, students have the opportunity to self-evaluate so they may continue improving across their professional career. This improvement is dependent upon the student’s ability to understand theory related to leadership and group facilitation, all of which are key components of experiential learning. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Experience Theory is one way to assist students in understanding theory as it applies to the implementation of a golf scramble. A closer examination of experiential learning and how it has been used in higher education and sport is warranted.

Literature Review

Definition of Experiential Learning

Educational researchers have clearly identified that experiential learning as a best practice in higher education settings (Conley, 2008; Hawkins & Weiss, 2004; Kros & Watson, 2004; Ruhaneu, 2005). According to Kros and Watson (2004), experiential learning is “a process through which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (p. 283). Experiential learning involves the student discovering, processing, and applying information and reflecting on what they have done (Conley, 2008). Essentially, experiential learning is a method that links “academic knowledge and practical skills” (Ruhaneu, 2005, p. 34) and “stresses practical application of knowledge to real-world situations” (Hawkins & Weiss, 2004, p. 3).

Characteristics of Experiential Learning

Characteristics of experiential learning include more emphasis on developing practical skills and less emphasis on regurgitating information and a higher order of thinking to include analysis, synthesis, and the ability to evaluate the outcomes (Koza & Marckette, 2008). In addition, researchers have also linked experiential learning to critical thinking, enhancement of well-being and personal growth, and an increased level of social integration resulting in retention of students (Koza & Marcketti, 2008).

Benefits of Experiential Learning

Researchers have clearly documented that experiential learning bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and teaches students to communicate with one another,

provides them with tools to lead, stimulates curiosity, promotes new experiences, increases self-confidence, develops critical thinking skills, solves complex problems, helps students to retain information better, develops or enhances the student's ability to deal with uncertainty, and provides the opportunity to make decisions while improving course outcomes (Hawkins & Weiss, 2004; Wolf, 2006; Wolf & Green, 2006).

Experiential Learning Models

There are various experiential learning models mentioned within the literature, however it is the works of John Dewey (1938) and David A. Kolb (1976; 1981; 1984) that still provides the central reference point of discussion when it comes to experiential learning.

Dewey's Experiential Learning Model. The term "experiential" learning can be tied back to John Dewey (1938). Dewey expressed the belief that "all genuine education comes through experience" (p. 25). Dewey's theories were related to four aspects of education (1938):

1. the relationships among teachers, learning, the curriculum, and community;
2. the ways learning occurs;
3. preparing for lives as citizens and individuals; and
4. thinking about what is learning and how

Dewey's model begins with knowledge, which is organized by the teacher into logical content pieces. The teacher facilitates the student's experiences with the content based on student readiness. The outcome of the experience leads to learning, which contributes to the learner readiness and knowledge, thus allowing the process to begin again. Even though Dewey's Experiential Learning Model is appropriate for this study, the researcher chose to utilize another model that would focus greater attention to the area of practitioner – particularly in the area of higher education. The model utilized throughout the study was Kolb's Experiential Learning Model.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model. David Kolb's Experiential Learning Model has also been utilized to provide a useful framework for experiential learning in the classroom (Bethell, 2011; Turesky & Galaher, 2011). Kolb (1981; 1984) introduced the professional education model of experiential learning that emphasizes "generating an action theory from your own experiences, and then continually modifying it to improve your effectiveness" (p. 53). The model explained how "experience is translated into concept that can be used to guide the choice of new experiences" (Wolfe, 2007, p. 185). The premises behind Kolb's model (Figure 1) is that it encourages students to

experience an experiential learning experience that shifts occur from experience to through and back again as the student gains more knowledge through reflection (Kolb, 1981; 1984). Kolb (1981) summarized the model by stating that genuine learners ...must be able to involve themselves fully, openly and without bias in new experiences (concrete experience); they must be able to observe and reflect on these experiences from many perspectives (reflective observation); they must be able to create concepts that integrate their observations into logically sound theories (abstract conceptualization); and they must be able to use these theories to make decisions and solve problems (active experimentation) (p. 236).

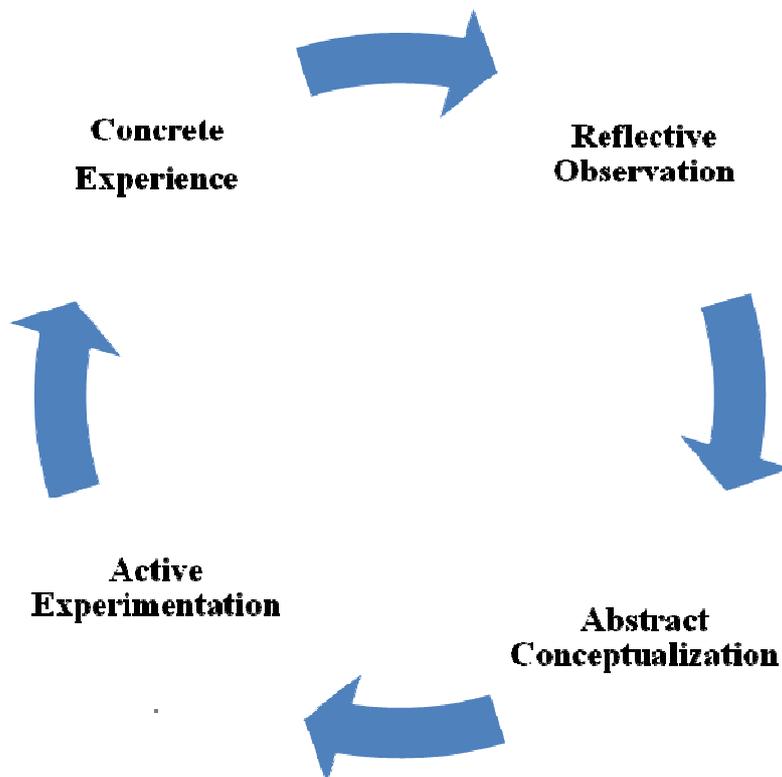


Figure 1. Kolb's experiential learning model.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model works on two levels – establishing a framework for four distinct learning styles – converger (think & do), accommodator (do and feel), diverger (feel and watch), and assimilator (watch and think) that are based on four-mode learning cycles – concrete experience (feeling), abstract conceptualization (thinking), reflective observation (watching), and active experimentation (doing). The process is

cyclical and can make students have continual transitions throughout the experiential learning experience (Figure 1).

Experiential Learning and Sport Management

Although there are many studies of experiential learning in non-sport settings there are limited within sport that provides concrete evidence of the benefits of this type of teaching pedagogy (Byrd, 2009; Canberg, 2009; Judge et al., 2011; Pierce, Petersen, & Meadows, 2011). However, both of these studies have provided favorable results for the use of experiential learning within sport management. For example, Byrd (2009) described the process of introducing a learning activity by utilizing experiential learning as the primary pedagogical tool.

This paper only provided steps in incorporating the experiential learning experience into learning and provided considerations and variations. Canberg (2009) discussed a course design for teaching event management based upon experiential learning. Results indicated that experiential learning provided a very powerful and meaningful way to teach students about managing events. Judge et al. (2011) introduced a racing project as a model pedagogical strategy to assist sport management educators. Results provided evidence of an active student-driven learning process produced benefits of integrating theory, research, and practice to skills in the real world. Pierce, Petersen, & Meadows (2011) assessed the effect of an experiential learning experience with a client based sport sales course. Results of the study indicated that students enrolled in the sport sales course improved their ability to open the sale and demonstrate enthusiasm during the sales calls.

Kolb's Experiential Learning and Sport Management

In addition to the studies mentioned above there are also additional studies utilizing Kolb's Experiential Learning Model within sport management (Miller, Meaney, & Podlug, 2012; Turesky and Gallagher, 2011). Both of these studies have provided favorable results in using Kolb's Experiential Learning Model with sport. For example, Miller, Meaney and Podlug (2012) described a service learning project that integrated Kolb's Experiential Learning Model into a graduate sport marketing course. Results of the exploratory study indicated that service-learning can be effectively used within a sport marketing curriculum utilizing Kolb's Experiential Learning Model. Pierce, Peterson, and Meadows (2011). Turesky & Gallaher (2011) utilized Kolb's four learning modes and styles as a guiding structure for professional coaches to individualize their approach to coaching leaders. The researchers found Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory provided

a sound theoretical framework to help professional coaches in the development of organizations leadership capacity.

With a limited number of research studies focused on experiential learning and sport management and even less with utilizing Kolb's Experiential Learning Model, the purpose of exploratory study was to integrate Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory into a Sport Event Management class across the four-mode learning cycles (concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, reflective observation) as a pedagogical tool for implementing a golf scramble. This study attempted to answer whether Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory four-mode learning cycle was an effective means for implementing a golf scramble. More specifically, the study explored whether effective learning was evident with students through the four different learning abilities of the concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation to make decisions and reflective observation.

The Design of the Golf Scramble Experiential Learning Experience

The experiential learning experience was a golf scramble which is the primary form of tournament play for golf associations. The golf scramble was a 4-person team with a shotgun start. There were fourteen teams of four players participating in the event. Each of the groups was assigned to a different hole on the golf course. When the starting time arrives, all groups began to play simultaneously from their assigned teeing grounds. Each player's tees off on each hole. The best of the tee shots is selected and all players play their second shots from that spot. The best of the second shots is determined, then all play their third shots from that spot, and so until the ball is holed. The shotgun start was chosen as it allowed the golf scramble to be completed in less time.

There were several steps in the planning, organizing, leading, and implementing the golf scramble that are introduced throughout this section of the paper and included two steps that were not directly related to Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory but were important to the process – setting up a relationship with the golf professional at the course and students signing up for the course. The next two steps included within the design of the course was incorporating the two dialectical modes of Kolb's experiential learning theory of for grasping the experience – concrete experience and abstract conceptualization; and two dialectical modes for transforming experience – reflective observation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984) (Figure 1).

Preliminary Steps

First, it was important a relationship was established with the current Universities' former golf coach who was the professional at a local course. The professor and a student met with the Golf Pro during the fall semester to discuss the logistics of how the golf scramble was to be implemented. An agreement was met and the golf scramble was scheduled for the upcoming spring semester.

Second, to participate in the experiential learning experience students enrolled in a Physical Education Department course (PED 334). This was a requirement for all sport management majors and minors and those kinesiology majors specializing in sport management. The description of the course is as follows, "introduces planning, funding, operating, and evaluating events with the sport industry. Provides practical application through the involvement of planning and managing events during the semester" (USI, 2011, p. 66). The student must have completed at least 32-hours prior to entering the course.

Grasping the Experience – Concrete Experience and Abstract Conceptualization

The first step to incorporate the concrete experience and abstract conceptualization within the class was through the syllabus. The syllabus focused on classroom learning that may be utilized during the actual implementation of the golf scramble. The syllabus was developed by the professor and specifically outlined how the course was going to matriculate throughout the semester. The syllabus was specific in identifying the student learning outcomes or learning objectives and incorporating Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory across the four-mode learning cycles. On the first day of class students were given a syllabus. Since the process of the learning theory is circular and can begin with any of the four modes the syllabus was designed with learning involving two dialectical modes for grasping the experience – concrete experience and abstract conceptualization; and two dialectical modes for transforming experience – reflective observation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

Part of the experiential learning experience was the relationship between the classroom experience and the practical application. In the classroom setting students were introduced to the concrete experience and abstract conceptualization through lectures and the use of the Sport Management Golf Scramble Event Portfolio (SMGSEP) Outline. A total of eight lectures were provided throughout the semester. Following each lecture a learning activity was provided through the use of the Sport Management Golf Scramble Event Portfolio (SMGSEP) Outline. The lectures and learning activities were

developed around understanding and applying the concepts of planning, organizing, leading and implementing. The lectures consisted of defining the event, developing the budget, identify and developing sponsorship packages, developing the registration form, identifying promotion and publicity opportunities, operation policies and procedures, delivery of hospitality, and awards banquet.

A total of eight learning activities were included in the SMGSEP. The SMGSEP Learning Activities were assigned following each lecture required the students to think about key concepts and how they can be used to complete the learning activity. The learning activities were used to plan and organize the event through the semester. The goal was for the student to move from abstract conceptualization to active experimentation. For example, the learning activity entitled “Defining the Event” included all committee working on the development of the vision, mission, goals, objectives and overview of the event. Students learned what these key concepts (from lecture) meant and had to critically think about how to conceptualize their thoughts on paper by developing their own vision, mission, goals, objectives, and overview as it related to the golf scramble.

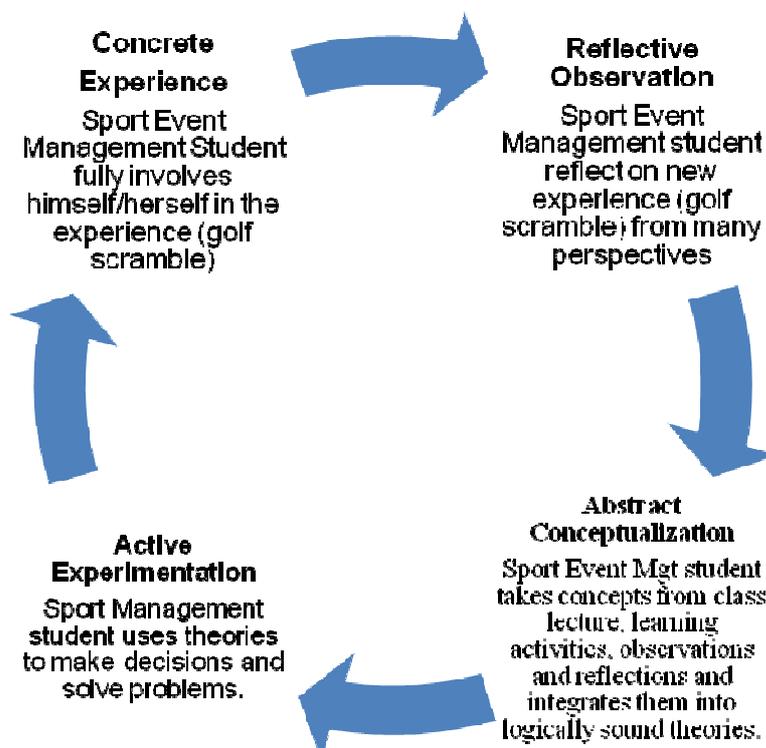


Figure 1. A golf scramble event management adaptation of Kolb's experiential learning model.

Next, each committee submitted their vision, mission, goals, objectives and overviews to the Co-Directors who synthesized the material for class discussion. The materials were then presented to the class in the form of a powerpoint presentation and a final consensus was made through a vote of what the final vision, mission, goals, objectives, and the overview would be for the golf scramble. This process of abstract conceptualization and active experimentation was completed for each content area of planning and organizing an event and included learning activities of developing the budget, identify and developing sponsorship packages, developing the registration form, identifying promotion and publicity opportunities, operation policies and procedures, delivery of hospitality, and awards banquet.

Once the golf scramble was completed an analysis of the golf scramble survey was completed by the hospitality committee of the leadership team and committee members. The leadership teams or individuals consisted of Co-Directors, operations, sponsorship, registration, promotion and publicity, appreciation and hospitality, and awards and raffle. Each student was provided with a Golf Scramble Operations Procedures Manual that listed all the leadership and committee positions on the first day of class. The students were instructed to review the manual before the next class period to determine their interest in a leadership and/or committee position. The first leadership positions that were established consisted of two tournament Co-Directors. The Co-Directors were the first and foremost leaders responsible for leading the team throughout the semester and on the day of the event to make sure it was a success. Both the tournament Co-Directors were the public face of the event and served as an advocate for the golf scramble, class, program, and university. One of the Co-Directors was in charge of financial operations associated with the event which included developing budgets, enforcing fiscal policy, tracking revenue, and keeping records of each transaction. All expenses had to be approved by the professor. The other Co-Director was responsible for the administration duties which included working as the primary liaison to the event site, supervision of operating procedures, and risk management.

The operations, sponsorship, registration, promotion and publicity, appreciation, hospitality, awards and raffle committees were formed. Each committee identified a chair to oversee that responsibilities were being met. The operations committee was responsible for the planning, organizing, executing and procuring all logistics, services, facilities, risk management publications, operation manuals, and physical materials required to stage the golf scramble. A few specific examples of tasks performed by the

operations committee included contract with printer/signage/banner company to coordinate signage list and artwork with printer, manage hole signage (inventory, placement schedule & signage design), and develop rules for golfers. The sponsorship committee was responsible for coordinating the class effort to update sponsorship proposal, packages, and to sell sponsorships. The sponsorship proposal outline was already developed the semester before in a Sport Marketing Course. Students were asked to take the Sport Event Management Course the following semester and be a part of the sponsorship committee. Thus, a few of the members of the sponsorship committee came from a prior Sport Marketing Course. A few specific examples of tasks performed by the sponsorship committee included managing sponsorship sales, coordinating sponsor contacts, creating sponsorship packages, negotiating and finalizing contracts, and coordinating sponsorship fulfillment.

The registration committee was responsible for all activities and outputs related to and including the distribution, collection, and effective utilization of event registration materials. This committee was responsible for recruiting participants and implementing a registration procedure for the participants. The time commitment and level of responsibility associated with this function heightens before and as the event date approaches. A few specific examples of tasks performed included creating and mailing various registration materials, coordinating special invites, and managing team lists. The promotion and publicity committee was responsible for coordinating with other committees to fulfill the marketing objectives developed with the marketing plan. As with the sponsorship proposal, the marketing plan was developed the previous semester by students in the Sport Marketing course. Students were encouraged to take the Sport Event Management class following the Sport Marketing course and be a member of the Promotion and Publicity committee. Thus, a few of the members of the committee were previous students from the prior Sport Marketing class. The committee worked closely with the sponsorship and registration committee to fulfill sponsorship agreements in addition to devising mutually beneficial marketing and promotional strategies. A few examples of specific tasks performed included publicizing and coordinating external communication (advertising, website design) creating an event logo, and designing event program.

The Appreciation Committee was responsible for attending to any needs of the sponsors, invited guests, or participants during the event, and for assembling a master database of all such individuals and sending all correspondence in appreciation for their

assistance with the event. A few examples of specific tasks included greeting participants as they arrive to the golf venue (carry golf clubs), send thank you letters to donors, sponsors, and players, and managing team and player photographs at the event. The intent of the Hospitality Committee was to take total responsibility for planning, organizing, and delivery of the resources and amenities required to satisfy the comfort needs and expectations of the golf event sponsors, invited guests, and participants. In addition, the hospitality committee was involved with all aspects of the food, beverages, and refreshments services provided to all persons involved with the event. A few examples of specific tasks included managing event banquet, managing day of event hospitality operations (coolers, tent) and managing volunteer accommodations.

The Awards and Silent Auction Committee was responsible for ensuring the awards banquet was coordinated in such a way as to stimulate interest and positive responses from sponsors, invited guests, and participants. The Awards and Silent Auction Committee actively solicited donations from sponsors and supporters to be utilized as door prizes, raffle items, gifts, and special acknowledgements items. A few examples of specific tasks included managing acquisition of donations for awards ceremony, managing inventory (pick up donations, log what has been received, manage storage), and manage awards ceremony (emcee, award packages).

The final step incorporated into the course design to support the concrete experience and abstract conceptualization were the presentations. Prior to the golf scramble each committee was responsible for presenting a pre-during-post committee presentation. Each committee developed a team presentation that provided information on what each student was responsible for within their group. The presentation was an opportunity for the instructor to see if the students were prepared to implement the golf scramble. Students learned what others were doing to get a better grasp on the whole experience.

Transforming the Experience – Reflective Observation and Active Experimentation

The first step to incorporate active experimentation and the reflective observation was the actual events that occurred throughout the experiential learning experience. Students arrived at the golf course and each committee chair made sure the members were performing their responsibilities. For active experimentation to take place students utilized concepts and theories throughout the implementation of the golf scramble to make decisions and solve problems. The students took complete control of the event

with the instructor taking a role of an observer. If difficulties occurred, the instructor allowed students to overcome the challenge by making modifications. Students were also encouraged to ask for help if a situation was inappropriate for them to deal with. Once the golf scramble was completed there was a sense of accomplishment. More importantly, students were able to link practical application of knowledge to a real-world situation (Hawkins & Weiss, 2004).

The second step to incorporate the reflective observation was the class debriefing. The class debriefing took place immediately following the event where students had items fresh in their memory. The debriefing continued the next class period as the golf scramble participant survey results would be analyzed and available for discussion. The professor focused on integration or embedding meaning of the student feedback with the theoretical knowledge taught in the classroom (planning, organizing, leading through lecture & SMGSEP Learning Activities) throughout the debriefing process.

The Circular Process

Although the sport management golf scramble procedures were introduced as two dialectical modes of Kolb's experiential learning theory for "grasping the experience" – concrete experience and abstract conceptualization; and two dialectical modes for "transforming the experience" – reflective observation and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984), it is important to remember the process is circular and throughout the course students made continual transitions based on what they learned in the classroom and observation during the event. The experiential learning experience bridged the gap between the theoretical knowledge and taught the students to communicate with one another, the tools to lead, stimulated curiosity, promoted a new experience, increased self-confidence, developed critical thinking skills, solved complex problems, helped students retain information better, developed or enhanced the students ability to deal with uncertainty, and provided the opportunity to make decisions while improving course outcomes (Hawkins & Weiss, 2004; Wolf, 2006; Wolf & Green, 2006). In essence, the integration of the course format, golf scramble experience and the debriefing process "set the stage for assimilation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes into practice and provided a path for transference into the future [sport management] environment" (Dreifuerst, 2009, p. 111).

Methodology

Sample

The participants in the experiential learning experience were 23 students (N=23). The students were from a 16-week sport event management course and 34 (n=34) were community members that participated in the event. Of the 23 students, 21.7% were sophomores, 52.2% were juniors, and 26.15 % were seniors. The majority of the students were full-time at 95.7% while the remaining 4.3% were part-time students. Eighty-seven percent of the students took the course to fulfill a requirement for their major, 8.7% took the course to serve as an elective, and 4.35 % took the course to fulfill a minor. The majority of the students expected to receive a grade of A (43.5%) or B (43.5%).

Questionnaire

The implementation of the Golf Scramble was evaluated across three different surveys and student debriefing. The Student Opinion of Instruction Survey (SOIS), the Universities Course Climate Survey (UCCS), the Participant Golf Scramble Survey and student debriefing were utilized to evaluate the effectiveness of the concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, and reflective observation of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. The SOIS and UCCS were distributed to students following the last day of class. The Golf Scramble Participant Survey was distributed to the students following the event.

The SOIS consisted of three demographic and three Likert-scale (1 = No Opinion, 2 = Agree, 3 = Agree Somewhat, 4 = Disagree Somewhat, 5 = Disagree items and open-ended comments. The demographic questions consisted of student status (e.g., freshmen, sophomore), class requirement, final grade, and gpa. The SOIS Likert Scale questions related to instructional strategy such as the class syllabus and class assignments. The SOIS was piloted by two different universities. In addition, the SOIS was piloted in a variety of sport management (e.g., sport marketing, sport facility management) classes at the current university and modified according to those questions that related to Kolb's Experiential Education Model. The SOIS has been in existence for the past 4 years and is a valid and reliable instrument to measure items related to instructional strategy. Table 1 provides questions from the SOIS.

Table 1. SOIS survey questions.

-
1. The instructor's out-of-class assignments helped me to understand the course content.
 2. The instructor provided helpful feedback on grades assignments.
 3. I was consistently informed of my grade standing in the class (blackboard).
 4. The instructor's explanations and/or demonstrations were clear.
 5. The instructor attempted to be fair and respectful toward students in class.
 6. Required course materials (such as texts) were helpful.
 7. In your opinion, what were the greatest strengths of this instructor and this class?
 8. In your opinion, what were the greatest weaknesses of this instructor and this class?
-

The UCCS was administered by the Universities' Office of Planning, Research, & Assessment. The UCCS reported on five sections: a) demographics, b) course evaluation, c) self-evaluation, d) profile, and e) open-ended questions. The demographic questions consisted of student status (e.g., freshmen, sophomore), full-time or part-time status, projected grade, and the primary reason for taking the course. The course evaluation used a five point Likert scale (5= strongly agree, 4 agree, 3 neutral, 2 disagree, 1 strongly disagree) to report on course evaluation items the researcher agreed were pertinent to the study. The UCCS consisted of questions related to course evaluation and open-ended comments related to course materials, visual texts, handouts, on-line items, and assignments increasing an understanding of course content. The UCCS was developed and piloted by the Universities Student Evaluation of Teaching Task Force Committee that was assembled by the University Faculty Senate. The Task Force gathered assessment data over a 13 year period to develop the UCCS. The UCCS was piloted and modifications were made by the Office of Planning, Research, and Assessment. The UCCS has been in existence for the past 6 years and is a valid and reliable instrument to measure items of perceptions and experiences of students.

The Golf Scramble Participant Survey and student debriefing was primarily used to evaluate active experimentation and reflective observation. The survey provided an opportunity to evaluate the experiential learning experience from a participant's

perspective. The Golf Scramble Survey consisted of three demographic and 11 Likert-scale (1 = Excellent, 2 = Good, 3 = Average, 4 = Fair, 5 = Poor items and an open-ended suggestion question. The Golf Scramble Participant Survey was developed by students in a previous sport event management course and was piloted in a prior golf scramble event. Modifications were made to the survey by students from the current class specific to each committee area. The Golf Scramble Participant Survey evaluated professionalism, effectiveness of signage, rating of contest, awards, meals, goodie bag items, time of event, and overall experience.

Process

A mixed-method approach was utilized for the exploratory study. The reason for using both quantitative and qualitative data was due to the concept that utilizing different approaches can strengthen the study. According to Creswell and Clark (2011), the mixed methods approach provides more evidence for studying a research problem, helps to answer questions that cannot be answered by quantitative and qualitative alone, provides a bridge across the sometimes adversarial divide between quantitative and qualitative research, encourages the use of multiple worldviews, or paradigms and is “practical” in that the researcher is free to use all methods possible to address a research problem.

Data analysis

The means and standard deviations were calculated for quantitative data. Results were displayed using a histogram. The quantitative data from the SIOS was analyzed by the students and researchers while the University Class Climate Evaluation survey was analyzed by the Office of Planning, Research, and Assessment. Means and standard deviations were calculated for the demographics using SPSS 16.0. The qualitative data were examined for themes from the participants’ comments retrieved from the open-ended questions on the SOIS and Class Climate Evaluation Survey. The qualitative data was analyzed by a three-step content-analytic procedure. First, the data was organized by using HyperResearcher 2.6 to condense the data. The researcher performed a constant comparative analysis to review all applicable comments to Kolb’s four-mode learning cycles (concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, reflective observation) and categorized the group comments with similar meaning (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). The unit of analysis for classification purposes was phrases rather than sentences because some sentences contained two or more divergent ideas. For example, the comments “This class taught me how to put on an event...” and “This

class prepared me very well for a future in event management” were grouped under career function “concrete experience.” Each phrase was assigned to a single category. The categories cultivated into “concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation and reflective experimentation grouped to capture the meaning reflected in the group of comments (Weber, 1990).

Second, external auditing was completed by a professor familiar with the experiential learning literature. The professor was provided with the names of Kolb’s modes of the learning cycle that were identified by the researcher and asked to re-categorize each of the comments into the appropriate function. An agreement was reached for those categories disagreed upon by moving the comment to another model of learning, creating a new function with a comment, or deleting the comment if it had already been covered in another function.

Third, the researcher narrowed down the total number of comments by deleting the stand-alone comments made by single participants. The rationale was to delete these comments from further analysis because the researcher was more interested in comments in which multiple participants shared common experiences. Finally, the analysis was completed through reading and rereading the comments and concluded the content analysis.

The researchers used multiple strategies introduced by Lincoln and Guba (1985) to strengthen the trustworthiness of the study. Credibility (internal validity) was established through “authenticity”. Authenticity was described by Neuman (2000), as a “fair, honest, and balanced account of social life from the viewpoint who lives it every day” (p. 31). The constant comparative analysis provided strength for the validity by establishing categories and developing themes from the open-ended questions.

Transferability (external validity) was provided through the “thick description” of comments provided by the students that supported the themes (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). The examples of the “thick descriptions” are found in the results section of the paper. Dependability (reliability) was supported by researcher debriefing. Each researcher examined the data and met to discuss themes and categories. Following many meetings amongst the researchers a final conclusion of the themes and categories were determined. Confirmability (objectivity) was based on the researchers’ ability to limit bias by not making any premature conclusions on the themes and/or categories, by using the constant comparative analysis, reading and rereading the data, and the researchers debriefing.

Results

Overall the student did support that Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory four-mode learning cycle was an effective means for implementing a golf scramble. More specifically, the students utilized the four different learning abilities of the concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, and reflective observation to effectively implement a golf scramble. The concrete experience, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation and reflective observation were measured by the SOIS, the UCCS, and resulted in student support for instructional strategy. Results of the SOIS indicated that students supported the instructional strategy related to effectiveness of course materials, the syllabus, lectures, and assignments with an average mean score of 3.88 (SD=.80). Results of the UCCS were reported by the Universities Office of Planning, Research, and Assessment through the use of Histograms (Table 2). The results also supported UCCS's instructional strategy of course materials used, such as visuals, texts, the handouts, and online items helping the students to learn with a mean score of 4.00 (SD=.95). In addition, students agreed the assignments helped the student increase their understanding of the course content with a mean score of 3.87 (SD = 1.1).

Table 2. Course climate evaluation histograms.

The course materials used, such as visuals, texts, handouts, and on-line items, helped me to learn.	SA	30.4%	47.8%	17.4%	0%	4.3%	SD	23
The assignments helped me increase my understanding of the course content.	SA	26.1%	52.2%	13%	0%	8.7%	SD	23

The qualitative responses revealed three themes from the open-ended questions on the SOIS. The themes were the student's real life experiences, instructional strategy and too much time. First, students most often mentioned how the involvement in the experience allowed them to learn how to put on an event. Students spoke most often about the experience and the involvement they had within the classroom. For example a student responded, "I enjoyed this class and learned a lot about everything that goes into putting on a golf scramble. I never realized everything that was required to put an event on." Another student stated, "The class taught me how to put on an event, the ins and outs of making the event successful, and the procedures and hard work it takes to

make an event successful.” Finally, a student said, “This [class] was very helpful as it showed me a lot about how to put together events and what to expect”.

Second, students also focused on the instructional strategies that were presented throughout the semester. Instructional strategy included items such as course materials, visuals, texts, handouts, on-line items, teaching style. A student responded, “I liked how the she [the professor] gave us guides on what to do, but she also let us learn on our own. You either had to step up and take a leadership role in this class, or back down and do nothing which meant learn nothing.” Another student responded by saying, “I thought the course helped to prepare me very well for a future in event management. . . overall it was a good experience”.

Third, the majority of the students disliked the amount of outside of class time that it took to implement the golf scramble. For example, “class relies heavily on having time available outside of class time. Some people have numerous things to do (work, volunteer time, etc) and do not have a lot of extra hours – alternatives should be offered.” Another student remarked “very time consuming class, but very helpful.” Other responses that consisted of one to three responses were instructor accessibility, instructor respect and fairly evaluated. The number of comments was based upon the 23 students that were enrolled in the class. The results of the content analysis may be found in Table 3.

Table 3. Results of content analysis for Kolbe’s experiential learning abilities.

Theme	No. of Comments
Real life experience	22
Instructional strategy	19
Too much time	16
Instructor Accessibility	3
Instructor Respect	1
Fairly Evaluated	1

The Golf Scramble Participant Survey and student debriefing session were the primary means of evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation (Active Participation & Reflective Observation) of the golf scramble. The results of the survey were based on 34 participants and may be found in Table 4. For each of the points, students commented on ways to improve on the golf scramble for next year. All the participants

agreed the event was completed in a timely manner. All areas of the survey were considered good to excellent with the highest “excellent” average being accessibility to registration area with a score of 79% and the highest “good” average being the game prizes, awards, and silent auction with a score of 59%. The area of concern that was considered to be “average” was the goodie bag items (41%).

Table 4. Golf scramble survey results.

<u>Excellent</u>	<u>Good</u>	<u>Average</u>	<u>Fair</u>	<u>Poor</u>
Professionalism, friendliness, readiness of staff				
.68	.26	.06	.00	.00
Accessibility of the registration area				
.79	.21	.00	.00	.00
Signage at each hole				
.41	.29	.24	.06	.00
Contests of for the golf scramble				
.24	.54	.18	.06	.00
Awards banquet experience				
.15	.70	.12	.03	.00
Game prizes, awards, and silent auction items				
.20	.59	.18	.03	.00
Catered meal at the banquet				
.41	.56	.03	.00	.00
Goodie bag items				
.15	.41	.41	.00	.03
Overall experience				
.41	.53	.06	.00	.00

The qualitative responses revealed three themes from the open-ended questions on the Golf Scramble Participant Survey. The themes were better explanation of the rules, professionalism, and services offered. First, participants voiced their opinion on making sure in the future there are better explanations on the rules of the game. For example, on participant stated, “It would be nice if next time you discussed the rules, how to play, how to use your string, and mulligans.” Another participant supported the

comment by saying, “More explanation of rules pertaining to how you can use the purchased mulligans and rope and where the contest holes were.”

Second, the participants mentioned the students were very professional and had a positive attitude. One participant stated, “the students were focused on doing a good job and it showed”. Another golfer said, “these students were well-prepared and professional.” Finally, another individual mentioned, “the students were well-dressed and I could identify them by their matching shirts...they carried my golf clubs and directed me to registration.”

Finally, participants mentioned several services they would have liked to have seen. For example, a golfer mentioned, “I would like to have alcohol when I am playing golf...future consideration should be made to sell alcohol.” Another person mentioned, “I would like to have seen breakfast along with the lunch that was provided to me.” Finally, another golfer mentioned, “It would have been nice to have nicer items in the goody bag.” The results of the content analysis may be found in Table 5. The number of comments was based upon the 34 participants that were enrolled in the class.

Table 5. Results of content analysis for active participation and reflective observation.

Theme	No. of Comments
Professionalism	25
Explanation of Rules	18
Services Offered	17

There was a student debriefing session in which all the students evaluated the results of the Golf Scramble Participant survey and provided feedback on how there could be a better explanation of the rules and services offered since professionalism did not seem to be an issue. The students had several explanations on improving the explanation of the rules for the next year. First, students recommended handing each participant a rules card when they check-in at the registration tables. The students stressed the importance of handing them the rules card as opposed to placing it in the bag. Second, students mentioned the rules card could be placed in the participant’s golf cart. Finally, the script for the beginning of the golf scramble needs to be reevaluated to make sure it is clear to all participants.

In terms of services offered, students cannot sell alcohol because it is a dry campus and students do not have a license to do so. Therefore, students suggested having the golf course employees sell alcohol during the event. Second, the students were not keen on serving both breakfast and lunch but suggested the breakfast would be enough for the participants as the cost would go up tremendously. Finally, the golfers suggested better items in the goody bag and the students suggested that sponsorship needs to make this a primary focus for the next year.

Overall, the students felt like the golf scramble was a success and was proud to have accomplished what they had accomplished during the semester.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results of the SIOS and the UCCS provided support for the use of Kolb's Learning Cycles as an effective way to plan, organize, lead, and implement an experiential learning experience such as the golf scramble. In Kolb's experiential learning theory (ELT), learning is seen as a continuous process where students are actively involved in new experiences, reflect on what has taken place, theorize about the experience, and finally apply this knowledge to new situations. Throughout this experience student utilized this continuous cycle that was introduced from abstract conceptualization and the concrete experience to the active experimentation and the reflective observation.

First, the students were introduced to the classroom through "instructional strategy" techniques (the syllabus, visuals, texts, handouts, online items) that were related to concrete experience and abstract conceptualization within the classroom. The instructional strategy techniques that were implemented within the classroom that support the concrete experience and abstract conceptualization were the syllabus, the Golf Scramble Event Portfolio (SMGSEP) learning activities and the presentation synthesis. The results of the UCCS and the SIOC survey clearly identified that students supported instructional strategy as an effective means of introducing the materials in the classroom that would eventually lead to the active experimentation of the event. The research also supports instructional strategy within the classroom as an important pedagogical tool for learning. Pierce, Peterson & Meadow (2011) reported that mental engagement allows students to process knowledge, skills and concepts to construct an understanding where meaning is made and learning is internalized. Essentially, the students were learning to connect academic knowledge with practical skills (Ruhanew,

2005) which leads to the next step in the integration of Kolbe's model in the implementation of the golf scramble – practical application of knowledge to real world situations.

Second, the active experimentation is the implementation of the event. The students had to link the academic knowledge (lecture) and practical skills (learning activities) and learn to apply them to a real-world situation (the implementation of the golf scramble). The qualitative responses from the SIOC supported that the active experimentation (implementation of event) was important to the student. The assimilation (experiential learning experience) or implementation of the golf scramble was a chance for students to demonstrate successfully their ability to transfer what they learned and experienced from one situation to the next.

The results also supported researchers that have clearly documented that experiential learning bridges the gap between theoretical knowledge and teaches students to communicate with one another, develops critical thinking skills, while assisting students to deal with uncertainty (Wolf & Green, 2006).

Finally, reflective observation or student debriefing was a useful exercise for the students. The primary reason for collecting the data from the participants was to determine what needed to be improved for next year. The reflective observation was measured through the use of the Golf Scramble Participant Survey and offered the students an opportunity to reflect or reexamine their golf scramble experience. The students reflected on the general themes of rules, professionalism and serviced offered during their student debriefing. Student debriefing is a common practice of an experiential learning experience and is an important practice. Warrick, Hunsaker, Cook, and Altman (1979) noted that the "debriefing phase is an intentional and important process that is designed to synergize, strengthen and transfer learning from an experiential learning exercise" (p. 91). Debriefing was used to promote reflective learning, to encourage students to analyze the strengths and weaknesses and to think about how to enhance or develop into a more skillful sport event manager.

Throughout the debriefing students also experienced an emotional release as students began to express their feelings about a side variety of responses participants gave them regarding the feedback from the Golf Scramble Event Survey. For example, the participants were not happy with the goody bags or how they were given to each participant. The majority of the students was involved with obtaining goody bag items and was frustrated with the participant scores. The discussion led to an emotional

release that redirected the attention of the student learner to reflective learning by facilitating the expression of their emotions. The expression of emotions acknowledged the power of the learning experience.

All the results support student learning outcomes in which students are preparing themselves for a job in sport event management. The course allowed students to plan, organize, lead and implement a “real” event which was mentioned as a key aspect of the students experience. Students learned the intricate details of even planning and management. Students had the opportunity to self-reflect and determine how to improve for the future. The improvement is based upon the student’s ability to understand theory related to leadership and group facilitation. In this study Kolbe’s Experiential Learning Experience Theory assisted students in understanding theory as it applied to the implementation of the golf scramble.

The study provided support for incorporating Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory across the four mode learning cycles of abstract conceptualization (lecture and learning activities), active experimentation (experiential learning experience), and concrete experience and reflective observation (debriefing) as a pedagogical tool for implementing a golf scramble. The entire experience allowed students to develop a strong ownership in their learning because they played an active role in developing the experience. Students learned in a more meaningful and productive way to obtain vital skills in managing an event. The students raised a total of \$4200.00 with 25% being deposited in the Sport Management professional development account and 75% being deposited into the Sport Management Scholarship account. The Co-Directors presented a poster at their state conference with all expenses paid for through the professional development account. Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory has since been used in the implementation of the Hearts on Fire 5k and March Madness 10k races. There are multiple benefits to utilizing Kolb’s Experiential Learning Modes Cycles in the classroom that can be expanded to other areas within sport management pedagogy as well as related fields.

Implications

This study provided a couple of implications for sport management educators. First, the study successfully demonstrated how Kolb’s Experiential Learning four-mode learning cycles was an effective means for implementing a golf scramble. The framework of how the course was implemented may be replicated for other events faculty may want to implement within their classroom. Faculty must first develop a syllabus that

demonstrates how the student matriculates through the program by basing the outline on Kolb's Experiential Learning Model. The faculty member must develop instructional materials that are related to the abstract conceptualization and concrete experience (lecture and learning activities). The final part of the framework is implementing the event (active experimentation) and providing feedback through reflective observation or student debriefing. All of these steps are a continuous cycle the student must go through for the implementation of an event to be successful.

Second, the study adds to the body of knowledge in regards to the support of using Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory in the classroom.

Limitations

There were a couple of limitations to the study. First, there was a small sample size of 28 undergraduate students enrolled in the sport event management course. It was not only a small sample size, but the majority of sport management programs offer this type of experiential learning experience course to graduate students as opposed to undergraduate students. Thus, students may not have taken any courses related to event management and therefore some topics may have been new to them. Second, this study only incorporated the Kolb's Experiential Learning Model into a sport event management course. Future research needs to expand the course selection.

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