

The participants work together in the writing of the contract. This is done in the participants' own words and in their own unique way. The contract may be presented in a variety of ways, for example, with the use of a flag, pictures from magazines, or a poster. It is important to remember that the younger the group, the more concrete the contract should be. Additions to the contract are made on a continuous basis, which means that it should be kept close at hand.

It is important that group members take shared ownership of their emotional and physical safety. As the group members decide what is acceptable and unacceptable within the group, the group will be partly responsible for the control that is exercised during the group process. When group members become co-responsible for the enforcement of group norms, they are placed in a position of power where they are empowered to take control of their own situation. The researcher found that the facilitator should have total control at the beginning of the process. However, as the process develops, this control will be reduced and the group members will become more empowered to determine the group's focus. This will also facilitate the development of the inter- and intra-personal skills.

Experiential learning process

The last important concept to take note of is the use of the experiential learning model (Figure 1). According to Gass (1993:4), most experiential learning programmes are based on the belief that learning or behavioural change must focus on including a direct experience in the growth process. It has furthermore been said that, in order to change, there should be a form of experience that triggers the change. This means that the closer a learner could be placed to the origin of change, the higher the transmission of knowledge is likely to be. Experiential learning further instils a sense of ownership over what has been learned and this also contributes towards the transfer of learning (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:3-4). This process could contribute to learning and behavioural change in poor people. The experiential learning process, as developed by David Kolb (Osland, Kolb & Rubin, 2001:43) and used by Jamison (2007), will be used to explain how learning and empowerment could be facilitated.

The first part of the process in terms of experiential theory consists of performing an activity (Jamison, 2007). This constitutes the doing part of the process and the activity or game forms the concrete experience that is needed to set the process in motion.

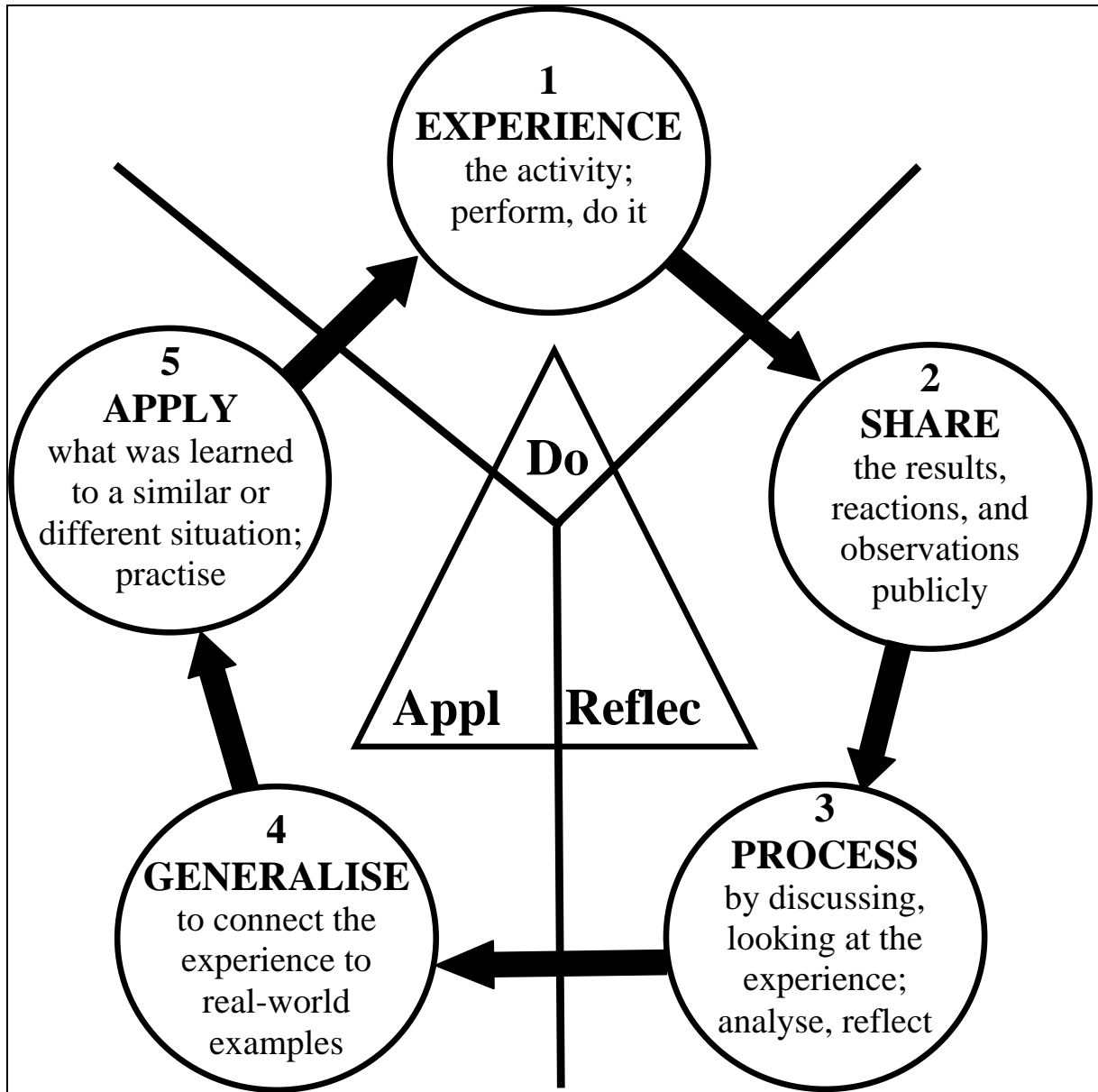
The second phase of the process is termed observation and reflection (Burnard, 1993:9), or share and process (Jamison, 2007). During this first part of the reflection phase the participants have to share the results of the activity as well as the reactions of group members and their general observations publicly. This narrative of the experience grants participants the opportunity to remember what happened and to become aware of events that took place during the activity and which went by unnoticed.

During the next phase (3) the participants are asked to discuss the positive and enriching as well as negative and degrading behaviour that surfaced during the activity. They have to discuss, analyse and reflect in order to process their learning.

The second last phase (4) starts when the group members have to connect the experience to real-life examples. In this phase the participant has to start to identify where in the real world s/he has experienced the identified behaviour or results of the activity. The influence of this behaviour should be discussed so that generalisations may be made. This will then lead to the next phase of the experiential learning process.

The last phase (5) of the process starts when one begins to plan on how to apply this newly-acquired knowledge in novel situations. The question put to members is how they think they could use this new knowledge in their day-to-day life. This is where the real transfer of learning takes place.

FIGURE 1
THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL



(Jamison, 2007)

The application of the experiential learning theory has the advantage that it uses simple adventure games and activities as well as other activities such as role-play, psychodrama and brainstorming to help participants see issues in their own lives differently (Burnard, 1993:18-28; Schoel, *et al.*, 1988:280-293). Games that are played and activities that are performed without an effective debriefing will mean nothing. Using this theory as a basis for debriefing encourages the poor person to look deeper into what has happened and to discover new solutions for old problems. These people are also helped to identify strengths that they were

previously unaware of. These strengths do not only lie on the physical level but also on the emotional level. The poor are empowered to take charge of their personal circumstances and change their lives through the process of a positive learning experience.

THE PROCESS OF ADVENTURE EMPOWERMENT

As indicated in the introduction, this paper understands empowerment to be about helping poor community members to gain the power needed to make their own decisions and take control of their own lives by reducing the effect of social or personal blocks limiting their growth and by increasing their personal capacity and self-confidence.

In order to ensure that growth takes place, it is necessary for the facilitator to use his/her skills, knowledge and a positive attitude to create change. Luckner and Nadler (1997:28) are of the opinion that disequilibrium should be created in order to promote this change. This is done through adventurous activities and the use of the experiential learning process. When disequilibrium is created during the first and second phases of the above-mentioned process, the facilitator should be willing and ready to facilitate learning and change. This is where empowerment begins, as the clients are helped to gain the power of decision making and action over their own lives. The effect of social or personal blocks is reduced and personal capacity and self-confidence are increased (Payne, 2005:295).

Before learning really takes place, the comfort zones of the participants ought to be challenged. As the disequilibrium increases they will become aware of different, and in certain instances uncomfortable, feelings. This is what Luckner and Nadler (1997:29) call *working at the edge*. This is where the realm of possibilities is to be found and constitutes the point at which new territory can be explored. The next part will deal with what happens before success is attained, how to facilitate this and what the basic components of this so-called edgework are.

WHAT HAPPENS AT THE EDGE?

As people get closer to the unknown, their sense of disequilibrium increases and they start to experience uncertainty. Their feelings intensify; they may become fearful, anxious, confused, excited, or feel alone. Their physical symptoms change: palms perspire, hearts race and respiration quickens. Their internal conversation will also start to get louder; they will start saying to themselves things like: "I can't do this", "I'll fail", and "I must do this perfectly" (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:29). The person is now at the so-called "edge" and has to make a decision: "Do I go on and hopefully attain success or do I retreat to a safe and comfortable environment without the exhilarating feeling of success?"

This usually happens during participation in the activity, i.e. phase 1 of the experiential learning process. I agree with Luckner and Nadler (1997:30) when they say that a wealth of valuable information gets lost if the facilitator waits for phases 2 and 3 of the experiential learning process before processing what has happened. If the facilitator waits too long before processing the feelings experienced, this information may be lost. This means that a facilitator should be attentive to what is happening in the group during the activity and be prepared to stop the activity for a few minutes in order to examine the feelings, patterns, beliefs and conversations of the group.

PROCESSING

High-quality processing is needed to increase the impact of the activity. The facilitator is to attempt to slow down or freeze the moments before the success or the retreat, so that individual thoughts, feelings and actions that make up their strengths and/or weaknesses become

conscious and both internally and externally communicated (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:31). The person should become emotionally aware of his/her inner self and what happens to other people, as this also forms part of EQ development (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2001:12). The facilitator must be aware of what happens just before a leap is taken towards success or back to a safe environment.

When processing, the first thing that participants should be made aware of is what happened just before the decision for progress or retreat was made. How did they personally sabotage or aid their efforts? Next, attention is given to the level of responsibility. They have to own their patterns of conversation, feelings and actions, and they should also identify their own typical responses. The participants will then have to be motivated to experiment with new behaviours and strategies. Finally, with generalisation and transference, the participants can predict how they will respond when they encounter new edges at home or at work (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:32-35).

In order to be effective in processing, the facilitator should be aware of the edge components. These are the things that one would make the group aware of during the processing and eventually alter or refine in order to assist group members in becoming more empowered beings.

EDGE COMPONENTS

It is important to recognise that many of the edge components that will be discussed overlap and influence each other. For the purposes of this discussion defences and typical patterns, feelings, physiology, beliefs, conversation, support and metaphors will be discussed separately (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:36-44). The facilitator should note that these components contribute towards the development of a person's self-concept, one of the overall aims of adventure-based work (Schoel *et al.*, 1988:12), and thus also to the emotional empowerment of the poor person.

Defences and typical patterns

People use different defence mechanisms to protect themselves against anxiety and fear of hurt and rejection. Zastrow (2001:136) mentions that a defence mechanism is a psychological attempt at avoiding or escaping painful conditions such as anxiety, frustration, hurt and guilt. He furthermore states that an individual's defence mechanisms are usually activated when s/he faces information that conflicts with his/her self-image. Defence mechanisms preserve the self-concept and self-esteem and soften the blows of failure, deprivation or guilt. Some of these defence mechanisms include rationalisation, projection, denial, fantasy and isolation.

A participant feeling anxious about what ensued during an activity could thus start to employ a defence mechanism to protect him/herself from feeling inadequate. In many cases these defence mechanisms become part of the person's being and s/he isn't always even aware of what s/he is doing. The facilitator should make the group member aware of this behaviour and encourage him/her to experiment with new behaviour and more productive patterns.

Feelings

Deprived people also have feelings. According to Le Roux and De Klerk (2001:18), a feeling is an internal physical reaction to something you experience. The stimulus can be something you perceive through your senses and which you then interpret. Many people have learned not to feel and cannot manage their feelings, sometimes just tolerating uncomfortable, unfamiliar and negative feelings (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:36).

The greater the disequilibrium becomes during the activity, the more these feelings will intensify. In order to be able to manage these feelings, it is important to be aware of them and to take responsibility for them. Being able to manage feelings in a proper, uplifting manner is one of the indications of a higher EQ, as this demonstrates a deeper emotional awareness (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2001:10).

Physiology

Specific physical symptoms may be associated with a particular feeling of discomfort. These symptoms could also be seen as internal clues such as a racing heartbeat, perspiration, a flushed face, a hollow feeling in the stomach, muscle contractions, and cold hands and feet (Le Roux & De Klerk, 2001:22; Luckner & Nadler, 1997:38).

If participants are aware of these physical symptoms and what they represent with regard to feelings, they can be helped to go beyond these roadblocks and develop new strategies for coping with these feelings. When the facilitator helps participants to identify the named physical symptoms and connect these with their feelings, it could become easier for them to continue and make one or another breakthrough. It could be helpful to explain a few stress management techniques to them such as improving the posture, breathing and positive self-talk (Davidson, 1999:235, 264, 279).

Beliefs

Beliefs usually start to develop very early in a person's life. People receive feedback from others with regard to what they are doing or not doing. Long-term inspirational or degrading feedback leads to the formation of a personal belief. This gives a person a "map" according to which s/he will behave. These beliefs will not feel good to the individual and could be self-limiting. Some of these core beliefs may include: "Something is wrong with me", "I can't", "I'm stupid" and "I don't know" (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:39).

It would be the task of the facilitator to help the participant and the group to identify these self-limiting beliefs as this could hamper a breakthrough to the next level. It would be important to acknowledge personal achievements as well as to motivate the group to be receptive, encouraging and supportive to the individual. Breaking this self-limiting behaviour will contribute to the empowerment of group members.

Conversation

The beliefs that a person holds about him/herself are supported by his/her inner conversations. One will have an inner dialogue with oneself, thus sustaining the "scripts" created for oneself. One such script could be that s/he is not sufficiently intelligent to make big decisions and thus no decision is made. These conversations are used to plan, confirm or refute the map that s/he has about him/herself (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:40).

As indicated previously, the facilitator will help the group members to become aware of their inner conversations and then focus their efforts on changing this to positive self-talk.

Support

Luckner and Nadler (1997:41) mention that a person's actions and choices are usually viewed as serving a positive purpose for them. Most people will choose a support that is either self-nurturing, or self-protective, or both. Qualities of these support systems include: (a) consistency, (b) security, (c) safety, (d) tension relief, (e) nourishment, (f) trustworthiness, and (g) encouragement. In the light of this, a person may depend on things like drugs, food, work, a

particular relationship, or a group to provide support. Personal experience has shown that many people have difficulty in directly asking for support and/or help.

Participants in an experiential activity could be helped to explore the type of support structures they have used in the past and to experiment with new, constructive ways of requesting and getting support from the group. In this process they learn to identify and use resources while at the edge. When confronted with other edge situations they will be prepared to ask for and make use of other, more constructive forms of support.

Metaphors

“I am on top of the world” and “I can see light at the end of the tunnel” are examples of metaphors. As seen from these examples, metaphors are very effective in communicating experiences. They constitute ideas, objects or descriptions that are identical in form and structure – but not necessarily in composition or function – to other ideas, objects or descriptions. The creation of metaphors is a natural and sometimes unconscious process that human beings employ in thinking and communicating. Metaphors can also be used to create patterns that connect the learning experience with the office, school or home environment (Luckner & Nadler, 1997:42; Priest & Gass, 1997:210).

The facilitator should assist the group in the formation of their own metaphors. They should be helped to connect their learning to other areas of life such as work and school. As they start to develop their own metaphors, it becomes easier to reconnect specific learning that has taken place at a later stage. The group could be asked to form their own “pictures” of what is happening at that stage. These “pictures” could be confirmed or changed at a later stage, whatever is applicable.

As seen in the foregoing discussion, it is necessary for the facilitator to make group members aware of their defences, feelings, physical changes, beliefs, communication, support and metaphors. Being aware of these will lead to an improved self-awareness that could contribute to a higher EQ. As a high EQ is seen as a contributing factor to personal success, attention will briefly be given to this phenomenon.

DEVELOPING EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AS PART OF THE EMPOWERMENT PROCESS

Emotional intelligence is a relatively new and growing area of behavioural investigation, with researchers working hard towards understanding the nature of this construct. There is a great diversity of theories and definitions of EQ, which can be problematic in scientific study (Zeidler, Matthews, Roberts & MacCann, 2003:69-70). As this paper does not constitute an evaluation of different theories, the theory of Mayer and Salovey will be used as a basis for discussion. Mayer and Salovey (1997:10) regard EQ as the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion; the ability to access and/or generate feelings when they facilitate thought; the ability to understand emotion and emotional knowledge; and the ability to regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual growth. From this definition it is evident that EQ is comprised of cognitive and emotional features.

Goleman (1998:317) accepted and refined the theory of Mayer and Salovey. He defined EQ within the workplace as the capacity for recognising one’s own feelings and those of others, for motivating oneself, and for the effective management of emotions in one’s relationships and in oneself. Three important elements of EQ emerge from this. They are the recognition of feelings, personal motivation and the management of emotions in relationships.

Using the above definition, Goleman (1998:318) identified five basic emotional and social competencies. They are:

- Self-awareness – Knowing what you feel at any specific moment, and using that to guide decision-making as well as having a realistic assessment of your own abilities and a well-grounded sense of self-confidence;
- Self-regulation – Handling emotions so that they facilitate and do not interfere with the task at hand; being conscientious and delaying gratification to pursue goals and recovering well from emotional distress;
- Motivation – Using your preferences to move and guide you towards your goals, to help you to initiate and strive for improvement and to persevere in the face of setbacks and frustrations;
- Empathy – Sensing what people are feeling, being able to take their perspective and cultivating rapport and harmonising with a diverse set of people;
- Social skills – Handling emotions in relationships well and accurately; reading social situations and networks; integrating smoothly; and using these skills to persuade and lead, negotiate and settle disputes for cooperation and teamwork.

With respect to the process of adventure empowerment and what should be achieved in this process, these basic emotional and social competencies will be developed. By using the experiential learning process and focusing on the edge components described, the facilitator will help participants to grow and develop their EQ. During this process their emotional poverty will be reduced and chances are good that they will become empowered to work on their material needs.

The question may be asked if there is a difference between EQ and emotional competencies. Blom (2000:54) is of the opinion that EQ shows the potential capacity that the individual has in terms of certain components consisting of specific knowledge, ability and skills in terms of emotional aspects. On the other hand, emotional competence shows the emotional competency of a person in terms of his/her ability to use his/her knowledge, ability and skills in this regard. A person that is emotionally capable has learned and is using emotions and emotional content. The conclusion is thus made that EQ can be learned and is thus something that can be changed. This supports the idea that adventure empowerment, which employs experiential learning, could be used in order to teach people to improve their EQ.

From the above definitions and the basic competencies defined by Goleman, it is apparent that EQ affects many aspects of an individual's mental and physical wellbeing. A high EQ will also facilitate the ability to get along with other people, to make sensible life choices, and to succeed in school, one's career and community life.

According to Abramovitz (2001:14), studies have shown that programmes aimed at the prevention of violence, teen smoking, drug abuse, pregnancy and school drop-out are most effective when they address the elements of EQ. Experts are also of the opinion that increased EQ can help to avoid both short-term injury risks and long-term illnesses such as heart disease, liver disease and certain cancers. These hazards are often a result of substance abuse and other dangerous lifestyle choices that go hand-in-hand with out-of-control emotional stress (Abramovitz, 2001:14). The opinion is held that the success of prevention programmes related to HIV and Aids could also be enhanced if EQ is improved.

The EQ development of the clients of social workers (individuals, groups and communities) could thus exercise a positive effect on them as they sometimes suffer from problems pertaining to violence, drug abuse, low motivation and uncontrollable emotions.

In order to empower the poor, life-skills programmes should thus be promoted which, amongst others, focus on the development of adaptability; inter-personal and intra-personal skills; how to function effectively within a group; and skills related to the ability to influence others, in other words, the development of EQ (Ebersöhn & Eloff, 2003:46-48). This can be done effectively with the use of experiential learning that uses adventure-based activities as described above.

CONCLUSION

The use of experiential learning and adventure-based activities to teach people new skills is not a new concept. Some of the cornerstones of adventure-based work, such as the use of a contract in a therapeutic setting, are also not new. In order to have an adventure experience, participants do not need a rush of adrenalin: they need an environment where they can learn new and exciting behaviour with the help of motivating and caring group members and a well-trained facilitator.

The focus of adventure empowerment falls on the identification and mobilisation of the inner potential of every person. People are motivated to take control of their lives and realise their potential and power. Furthermore, it focuses on the expansion of positive life values such as integrity, respect, love and loyalty. People experiencing difficult circumstances are encouraged to make choices so as to direct their lives within a framework of positive values.

An important principle of therapeutic adventure work is to motivate participants to do things that they would not normally do. They must leave the “safe” world to which they are accustomed for a new challenge. In this way unique outcomes are generated and people grow. This then leads to the empowerment of participants so that they can adapt more successfully to their environment and in so doing become well-adjusted, well-motivated citizens, that is, people who could successfully carry the burden of creating a better South Africa and reducing their own economic and emotional poverty.

Lastly, the effectiveness of the use of adventure to increase the EQ of poor people has not yet been verified in a scientifically accountable manner in the South African context. What is reflected upon in this article has been drawn mainly from personal experience, and from the feedback received from other practitioners and the available literature. There is, however, a need for in-depth longitudinal empirical research that will provide concrete scientific data to support the claims made in this article.

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