

# **Beyond “Sit and Get”: Experiential Education Theory and Practice in Teacher Education & Professional Development**

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## **Why is it important?**

*There was great conviction by Hahn that carry-over existed from the Outward Bound experience into the everyday world.*

Tony Richards, **Kurt Hahn: The Midwife of Educational Ideas**

Even though professional development is acknowledged as important in retaining teachers, in building capacity to address challenges in education, and in improving educational organizations, it suffers a poor reputation among teachers (Pritchard and Marshall, 2002). To that end, Wilson and Berne (1999) found that “teachers are loath to participate in anything that smacks of one-day workshops” and that there is a lack of empirical evidence that teachers actually learn anything through professional development.

One approach that has played a viable yet underdeveloped role in educational reform and professional development is the field of experiential education. Emphasized is the need to use one’s experiences as the context for education. Through facilitated reflection on these experiences, growth and transformation are possible for professional educators. A study on the effects of an Outward Bound Teachers’ Practica (Hawkes, 1970) found that an Outward Bound model of professional development did have strong and discernible effects on the teachers’ classroom practices after their time on course.

## **How the session will be run**

This interactive workshop will engage participants in considering three experiential professional development programs (a year-long engagement with faculty at one school, a week-long graduate course in Northern Arizona, and an eight-day Educators’ Expedition taught by Outward Bound) to provide insights on the opportunities and challenges of current models. The activities and discussion aim to broadening the understanding of the criteria needed for a successful and transformative professional development experience based on the theories and practice of experiential teaching and learning.