Decoding the Debrief

Dr. Erin Baumann, SLATE, Harvard Kennedy School
Kolb’s Cycle of Experiential Learning

Concrete Experience – engaging directly in authentic situation

Active Experimentation – testing new ideas; honing skills in a new experience

Reflective Observation – noticing what happened and relating to past experience and conceptual understandings

Abstract Conceptualization – distilling perceptions into abstract concepts

Boston University, Center for Teaching & Learning
Learning purposes of a debrief

➢ Catharsis
➢ Contextualization
➢ Evaluation
➢ Iteration
➢ Synthesis
➢ Operationalization
➢ Extrapolation
The Debrief Process

Reflection
- What happened?
- How did you think/feel when...?
- What are you thinking/feeling now about...?
- Who shared this experience / shares this feeling?
- What did you expect? How did was happened compare?
- Were there any surprises?

Analysis
- What did you notice?
- What lessons/information did you draw on?
- Why did you do what you did?
- What was your intention when...?
- Why do you think ________ happened?
- If you had this to do again, what (if anything) would you do differently?

Application
- What would happen if...?
- What would you do next?
- What is new?
- Did you change your thinking about ____? Why? How?
- How would deal with similar situations outside the classroom?
- What do you take away from this?
Factors to consider

In the design–
- Objective of the exercise
- Curricular context of the exercise
- Complexity of the scenario
- Experience level of learners
- Logistics of the exercise

In the execution–
- Role of the facilitator
- Timing
- Structure
- Setting
Necessities

- Targeted reflection
- Universal inclusion
- Plain language
- Bring questions, not answers
- Focus on opportunities, not errors
- Listen actively, act accordingly

- Flexibility
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