

What is the relationship between personal experience and knowledge?

(950 words)

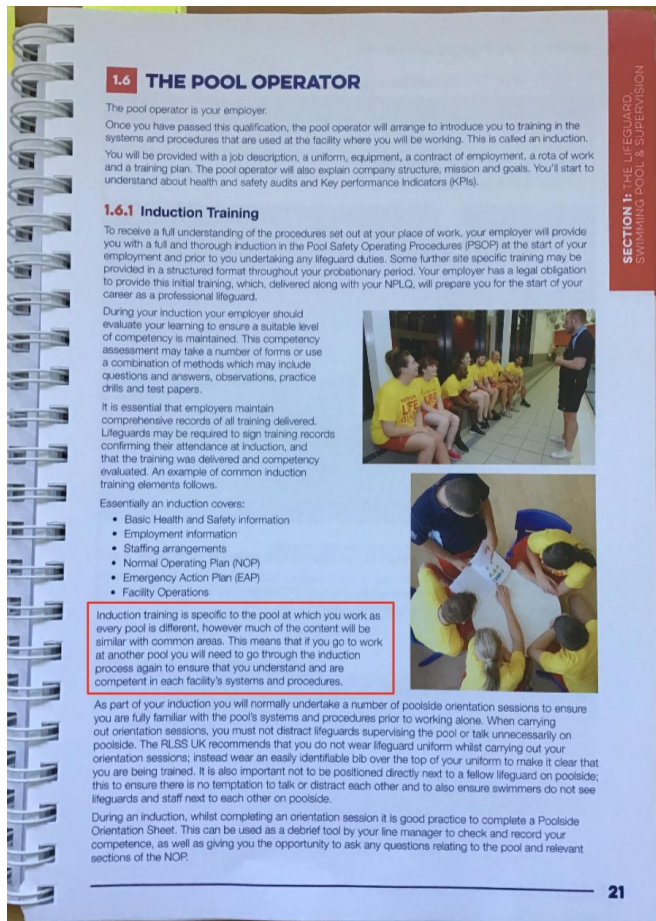
OBJECT 1: (photo of me diving)



This object is a photo of me coming out of a back dive tuck at a competition when I was diving a few years ago. I chose this to demonstrate that personal experience can provide a certain type of knowledge that cannot be acquired in any other way. During this dive you have to know when to come out of the dive at the right time so that the dive is clean and you don't injure yourself landing badly on the water; this is learnt through muscle memory. Muscle memory is an unconscious type of knowledge in your body, also known as procedural knowledge. It can only occur after repeating personal experiences over and over again because it is specific to your body and the actions that you take. It is knowledge that is unique to you - no one else can possess the exact same muscle memory. It can also help you gain further knowledge because once you have the basic structure of the dive in your muscle memory, you perform that element unconsciously. Consequently, you can focus on learning other details of the dive so that you can make it as well executed as possible, important if you are practising a dive for a competition. Another example is learning to play the piano. Learning where the different keys are becomes muscle memory which allows you to read the music, instead of looking down at the keys; hence, you focus on the details of the music. However, muscle memory can have a negative effect on your knowledge because if it

gains incorrect knowledge it is hard to change, as it is programmed into your muscles as a form of unconscious knowledge. This means that your conscious mind has to fight to override this unconscious knowledge which takes effort and time and therefore can lead to a delay in the acquisition of new knowledge. This shows that personal experience in the form of procedural knowledge is unique to the individual, and can have both a positive and negative relationship with knowledge.

OBJECT 2: (lifeguard manual page on induction shifts)



The second object is a photo of a page in my lifeguards' candidate manual which I used while training to become a lifeguard. It's a section that explains the importance of induction training before starting employment at a pool. I have chosen this object because it highlights how personal experience allows you to consolidate and deepen your understanding of specific knowledge. Induction training is where you shadow another lifeguard for several days in order to understand the workings of being a lifeguard at the specific location you will be employed. Although the general knowledge of how to be a lifeguard is covered in the manual and you learn this during your training course you don't learn how to apply this knowledge in a real world situation. Being on poolside watching a pool full of people in the correct way is very different from learning about how to do it in a textbook solely in order to pass the test to become a lifeguard as that is purely theoretical. For example, the manual teaches you how to deal with swimmers who break the rules and what the rules are, but no

manual can cover every single thing that could possibly go wrong in real life. Frequently it comes down to thinking on the spot and logic. The personal experience of the induction also allows you to see which issues are most common and require dealing with regularly. The personal experience of an induction shift allows you to take your theoretical knowledge of how to be a good lifeguard and put it into practice which is the most important part. There is no point knowing how to scan a pool or rescue a swimmer theoretically; in real life the knowledge is only useful and purposeful if you can apply it practically. My first object shows how personal experience provides unique knowledge to you as a person. This object goes further and demonstrates that personal experience can also develop further knowledge that you already possess.

OBJECT 3: (Photo of a netball)



This photo is my netball, which my dad bought for me at the first ever netball match I attended and I use it to practice netball all the time now. This match is where I first learnt how to play netball. I had never seen anyone play netball before and had no personal experience of the game. By the end of the match, I had an almost complete knowledge of how the game worked and how to play. I did not need to play myself or have previous personal knowledge of the game in order to understand it, I only needed the time to watch

other people play in order to gain the knowledge. This is because the game is simple and by watching other players playing netball I could use logic based on knowledge I already have to deduce the rules used in the match. This shows it is still possible to gain new knowledge without personal experience suggesting that gaining knowledge is not dependent on personal experience. However if I had even the smallest amount of personal experience of netball, such as knowing that you cannot move with the ball, gaining the knowledge of how to play would have been a much faster experience and it would not have taken me an entire match to figure out how netball is played. This is because although I could watch the game and use logic to figure out how to play, having personal experience means that you already have the foundation of knowledge and adding new knowledge is faster. Without that foundation, it inevitably takes more effort and time to gain new knowledge, although it is not impossible.

References:

- **Object 1**
 - Royal Life Saving Society UK, 2019, Edition 6, Generation 9, The Lifeguard Candidate Manual, Page 21
- **Object 2**
 - Photo of author diving, from authors private collection
- **Object 3**
 - Photo of netball, from authors private collection