From Passive To Participatory: Rethinking School Education Through Experiential Learning

Priyanka Sharma[1*], Prof. Lajwanti[2]

[1*]Ph.D Research Scholar, Deptt. Of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institute, Agra
[2]Deptt. Of Pedagogical Sciences, Faculty of Education, Dayalbagh Educational Institute,Agra
Email:1. priyankaupadhyay058@gmail.com, 2. dei.lajwanti@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	We are always acquiring new skills throughout our lives, so learning is a continuous process. We all acquire new knowledge, whether as parents, students, teachers, or simply as people. Experiential learning is referred to as learning through direct experience or learning by practicing and doing. It is regarded as an effective educational approach because it can influence the development of learners' meta-cognitive skills and implementation abilities through practical application of their knowledge in real-world situations and opportunities for self-directed learning. Therefore, all experiences should be thoughtfully chosen to support the learning process. Experiential learning is an engaging educational method that immerses students of diverse ages, backgrounds, and experience levels. It emphasizes participation and dynamism. Students involve themselves in this learning approach as an educational strategy through practical exercises, active participation, and reflection. Students are driven to engage in research, carry out experiments, and utilize their knowledge in real-world contexts. The NEP (2020) advocates for an experiential learning method that provides hands-on experience for both conceptual and practical knowledge. This approach often motivates learners to explore problems in a way that promotes holistic comprehension across various fields (interdisciplinary approach). Students would benefit from a more meaningful, comprehensive, and coherent learning experience through the implementation of experiential and multidisciplinary approaches. Textbook learning should be emphasized less, while hands-on learning with physical exploration as the main content source should be emphasized more (NCFSE) 2023. **Keywords:** Experiential Learning, School Education, Multidisciplinary approach, Innovative Approach.

INTRODUCTION

Education serves as a vital mechanism for our learning process, ensuring the ongoing transfer of our collective knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits across generations for the sake of human survival. With a strong emphasis on experiential learning, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 brought about a paradigm shift in the Indian education system by centering students in the learning process. The approach of experiential learning transcends the realms of passive learning and rote memorization.

It is a pedagogical method that allows students to learn through practical experience, reflect on those experiences to cultivate new skills, attitudes, and perspectives, and ultimately achieve a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Being able to tailor knowledge to particular circumstances and promote self-directed learning and can influence the way in which learners cultivate and apply their meta-cognition skills.

Experiential learning aims to enhance learners' understanding and promote the cultivation of capable skills and behaviors by creating experiences that enable the practical application of knowledge and skills in real-life contexts. Students of all ages have been shown to benefit from this learning approach, which has been the subject of extensive research for many years.

Experiential learning is described as a method of actively generating meaning through the interaction between a person's inner world and their environment (C. Beard and J. Wilson, 2013). To summarize,

experiential learning is the process through which students learn by doing, practicing, and reflecting on their experiences. Experiential learning is essential for innovative teaching methods, as it seeks to shift students' learning from rote memorization to a model based on action and personal experience.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

It outlines a method of education that promotes the idea of learning through experimentation and knowledge construction, encouraging students to develop skills based on their own experiences. By engaging in new activities and experiences, learners cultivate fresh understandings; teachers can further promote learning by taking part in certain experiential activities. Thus, the student is the focal point, and it falls to the teacher to come up with a plan for piquing his interest in new experiences. It provides him with information and chances to hone specific skills and b

ehaviors. It denotes a learning approach that fosters learning, the idea of gaining knowledge through experimentation aimed at knowledge construction, and the enhancement of competence skills through direct experience. Experiential learning involves providing students with real-world experiences that allow them to apply their knowledge and reflect on those experiences (Silberman 2007).

Studies have shown that experiential learning highlights the distinctive learning processes of individual learners (Gross and Rutland, 2017). This is a process through which students 'learn by doing' and where direct experiences foster knowledge, personalized skills, and democratic values. Learning based on experience starts with the organization of educational activities that provide a basis for experience. After taking part in the activity, participants may reflect on their experiences and generate new knowledge. (Knapp, 2001). According to Beard & Wilson (2002), a core aspect of experiential learning is that students actively engage in relevant and meaningful activities, which offer enough stimulation for them to acquire knowledge. Experience acts as a form of action, while reflection contributes to the development of theory, merging practice and theory. (Beard & Wilson, 2002; Boud, Keough& Walker, 1985; Higgins &Nichol, 2002). This learning aims mainly at gaining knowledge, developing new skills, and understanding complex concepts through active engagement with the environment. By applying the theory and technique of experiential learning, educators purposefully engage students in direct experience and focused reflection to expand their knowledge, enhance their skills, and help them understand their values.

Fig 1. Concept of Experiential Learning

Experiential Learning theoretical framework
The concept of experiential learning in classrooms is not new. The origins of learning theories emphasizing "learning through experience" or "learning by doing" can be traced back to the contributions of notable educational psychologists such as John Dewey (1938), Jean Piaget (1952), Carl Rogers (1969), and David A. Kolb (1984).

According to Kolbs (1984), experience is transformed to generate the process of knowledge.

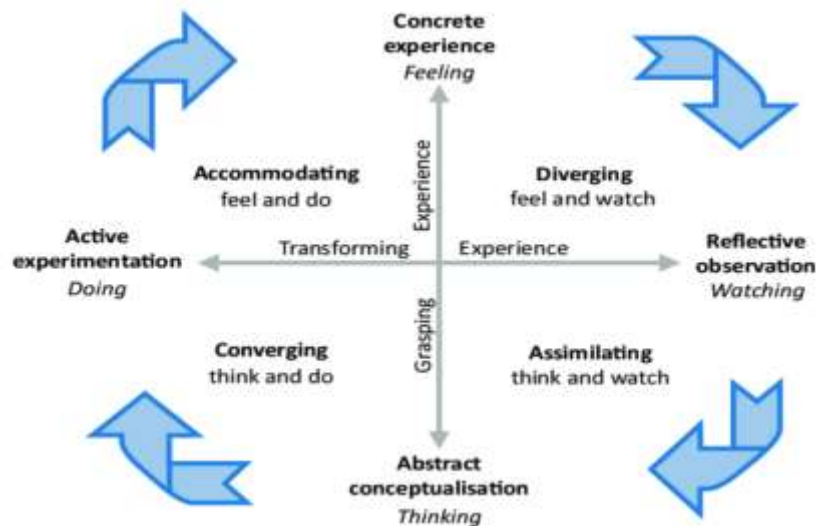Kolb's experiential learning cycle comprises four stages:

Fig 2. Kolbs Experiential Learning Theory
Source: https://educationaltechnology.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/kolb-learning.png

Learning stages of Kolb's Cycle

• **Concrete Experiences (CE):** Every learner takes part in a task or activity during a concrete experience. Kolb was of the opinion that involvement is the essential factor for learning. Learners need more than just reading about it or watching it in action. To gain new knowledge, learners need to actively participate in the task.

• **Reflective Observation (RO):** Once the learner has taken part in the direct experience, he or she reflects on the task from a distance. During this phase of the learning cycle, learners can ask questions and talk about their experiences with peers.

• **Abstract Conceptualization (AC):** When the learner starts to categorize concepts and draw conclusions about what happened, they transition from (RO) to (AC). This entails making sense of the experience and drawing parallels to their present comprehension of the concept.

• **Active Experimentation (AE):** This stage is the testing phase in the cycle. Students re-engage in the task, aiming to apply their conclusions to new experiences. They can analyze and predict tasks, as well as plan based on the acquired knowledge for future actions.

PRINCIPLES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Members of the National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE, 1998) provide advice on assisting learners in translating real-world activities into meaningful learning by following eight good practice principles applicable to all experiential learning activities.

i.**Intension:** Intention is the consciousness that enables individuals to acquire knowledge and learn more to achieve their aims and perform the actions that constitute the experience. To achieve enhanced learning, it is essential for both the educators and learners to have a clear understanding of the experience's purpose.

ii.**Planning and Preparedness**: The teacher has to guarantee that all is arranged for the experience to unfold without issues. From the very beginning, it is crucial to begin planning for the experience or program, focusing on the established intentions, goals, objectives, and activities.

iii.**Authencity:** Students engage in meaningful learning when they take an active part in experiences that are relevant and practical in the real world. This experience should be rooted in reality, applicable to the current situation, and designed with consideration of how one would respond in a real-life context.

iv.**Reflection:** Reflection is what transforms a simple experience into a learning opportunity. The learner must test assumptions and hypotheses about the outcomes of choices and actions in order to discover and internalize knowledge, then compare the results to previous knowledge and future implications.

v.**Orientation and Training:** For everyone to gain maximum benefit from the experience, it is essential for all organizational partners and others involved possess fundamental background knowledge about each other and about the context and setting in which the experience will occur.

vi.**Oversight and Ongoing Enhancement:** To reach quality objectives, it is essential to monitor processes, provide feedback, and pursue ongoing enhancement using a variety of methods.

vii.**Assessment and Evaluation:** Assessment offers extensive insights into the experience process as a whole and how it corresponds with the objectives that were put forward. Evaluation tools are used to adjust the goals and qualitative objectives established at the beginning of the experience.

PRESENT DIFFICULTIES IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Being a proactive form of self-learning, experiential learning encompasses all subject areas. It represents a progressive move in the field of education and has emerged as a brand-new industry (ChintanShivir,2017). But there are still certain problems and difficulties for putting experiential learning activities into practice at the school level, with more specifics as follows:

- **A challenge in carrying out the curriculum reform:** At the grassroots level, curriculum delivery is delayed and there is a lack of understanding of the rationale behind contextualizing curriculum.
- **No complete experiential learning model exists**: The teaching-learning process excludes experiential learning modalities. It is typically not included in the mainstream teaching-learning process. The inclusion of constructivism or activity-based learning is absent from curriculum transactions. Theoretical learning and rote memory are prioritized.
- **Curriculum integration challenges:** In the current educational system, it is challenging to apply experiential learning techniques. Less room is available for instructors in their pre-service teacher curriculum and practicum.
- The idea of skill evaluation in a particular academic subject is not well understood, and teacher educators lack experience in experiential learning.
- **Key stakeholder capacity building and training:** The training provided to student teachers at pre-service levels places more emphasis on content than pedagogy. There is no availability of competent specialists and advisors in the field of experience-based education. Administrator's leadership development focuses solely on administrative matters.

TENETS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

The following are the tenets of experiential learning, as stated by Rogers (1969):
- Significant learning occurs when the subject matter is relevant to students.
- When external hazards are at their lowest, learning which is self-threatening (such as new attitudes or viewpoints) is simpler to internalize.
- Learning proceeds more quickly when there is little threat to oneself
- Self-initiated learning is more effective and long-lasting.

Pros and Cons of Experiential Learning

Pros	Cons
□ Real-world Experiences	□ Limitation of Resources
□ Learning from Mistakes	□ Difficulty in Assessment
□ Accelerated Learning	□ Requirement Proper Guidance
□ Improve Creativity	□ Time Constraints
□ Develop Life skills	□ Management Difficulty
□ Promotes Life Long Learning	

Fig 3. Pros and Cons of Experiential Learning

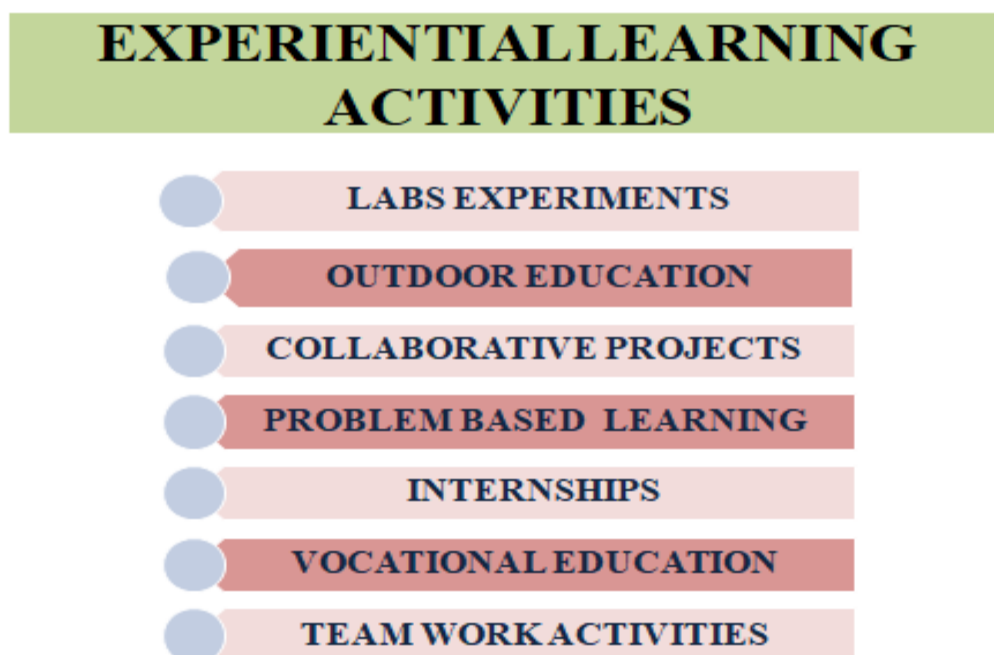### ALIGNING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WITH THE VISION OF NEP (2020)

Experiential learning is not only compatible with NEP 2020, but it also lies at the heart of its vision. It provides a specific teaching framework to achieve the NEP's objectives of joyful, meaningful, and skill-enhancing education. Therefore, institutions should allocate resources to teacher training, curriculum development, and infrastructure that facilitate experiential learning methods.

For students:
- **Overall Development:** Stresses the significance of comprehensive development for students, in addition to their academic success. It fosters creativity, empathy, adaptability, and resilience. Students gain life skills crucial for their personal and professional development through practical learning (Sarkar, 2022).
- **Makes learning relatable for participants:** Participants have the opportunity to link new concepts with existing ones while reinforcing their prior knowledge.
- **Develop practical understanding:** One of the greatest difficulties students encounter is linking theoretical concepts to real-life situations. When students can apply knowledge and data in real-world situations, they engage actively beyond theory and mastery of concepts—not merely memorizing facts.
- **Connections between theory and practice**: Participants can utilize their acquired knowledge, examine the application of theoretical concepts in real-world scenarios, analyze, and formulate conclusions.
- **Facilitates memory retention:** Enhances memory retention through the establishment of strong connections between emotions and cognitive processes. When the content is linked to emotions and values, participants' learning improves.
- **Supports the cultivation of lifelong learning:** By supporting participants in gaining fundamental knowledge and aiding them in critical thinking, conceptualization, and planning for the future.
- **Promote Communication and Teamwork skills:** Experiential learning, which often includes group projects and various educational activities, nurtures intrapersonal skills. By enhancing social skills, it will give students the confidence to collaborate effectively in diverse teams.

For educators:
- **Enhance involvement:** Instead of delivering a lecture that doesn't engage your audience, experiential learning empowers students to take charge. This offers students a sense of control over their education, which helps with information retention and fosters a deeper understanding of the lesson.
- **Promote developmental skills:** Experiential learning not only aids students in refining their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities; it also aids students in acquiring a nuanced understanding of the subject and cultivating a growth mindset. Rather than fearing challenges and failure, they will demonstrate greater resilience and adaptability in these environments.
- **Enhance relationships:** Personal connections are encouraged and stronger relationships are built through interactive learning. When all individuals unite in pursuit of a common objective, both students and educators improve their communication with one another and foster an environment characterized by greater trust and collaboration. Students also cultivate greater self-trust and enhance their respect for teachers and fellow students.
- **Reform Assessment Method**: With a shift away from high-stakes examinations, the NEP 2020 promotes formative assessment and the evaluation of practical knowledge. The use of alternative assessments- like portfolios, peer reviews, performance tasks, and project-based evaluations is made possible by experiential learning.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ACTIVITIES

- LABS EXPERIMENTS
- OUTDOOR EDUCATION
- COLLABORATIVE PROJECTS
- PROBLEM BASED LEARNING
- INTERNSHIPS
- VOCATIONAL EDUCATION
- TEAM WORK ACTIVITIES

Fig 4. Experiential Learning Activities

CONCLUSION

The concept of experiential learning is not new in India. In terms of experiential learning, the "Gurukul system" represented the most effective educational model in Indian history. In Gurukul culture, education was imparted through various activities in which learners participated.

Numerous experiential learning initiatives were launched in India to enhance the enjoyment and fascination of learning. These days, students engage in experiential learning—an innovative, activity-centered educational approach—that emphasizes hands-on experience. Such events can nurture self-trust, optimism, and skills in analysis and making choices. While engaging in new activities, the learner cultivates fresh understandings. Experiential learning, as defined by (Zurbrick,1990) is learning that engages students directly with the phenomenon under investigation.

In a natural setting, the senses are directly and purposefully engaged in order to address the real world. Experiential learning encompasses activities such as practical lab work, internships, practicum, fieldwork, study abroad opportunities, and undergraduate research. This approach enhances student learning by fostering greater engagement, as it is centered on students and tailored to their needs. The new educational policy (NEP) 2020 and the national curriculum framework for school education (NCFSE) 2023 also recommend this type of learning. By incorporating experiential learning into the (NEP) 2020, a significant step forward has been taken toward creating a more thorough and effective educational system. The policy fosters collaboration, curiosity, and hands-on research, all of which contribute to a lifelong passion for learning.Therefore, at all levels of education, experiential learning should be integrated into the educational process for students' holistic development.

REFERENCE

- Beard, C., & Wilson, J.P. (2002). The power of experiential learning: A handbook for trainers and educators. London: Kogan Page.
- Beard, C., & Wilson, J. P. (2013). Experiential learning: A handbook for education, training and coaching (3rd ed.) Kohan Page.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Boud, D., Keogh, R., and Walker, D. (1985). Reflection: Turning experience into learning. London: Kogan Page.
- Chintan Shivir (2017). Recommendation for experiential Learning in National workshop on 6-7 November, organized by Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Human Resource and Development, Govt. of India.
- Gross, Z., & Rutland, S. D. (2017). Experiential learning in informal educational settings. International Review of Education, 63(1), 1-8. doi:10.1007/s11159- 017-96256
- Higgins, P.,& Nicol, R.(2002). Outdoor education - authentic learning in the context of landscapes,2,3-14.Kisa,Sweden.Retrieved,from,January08,2012 http://www.kinda.se/web/kinda/internet.nsf/0/aa2005090912240341070438632668/$FILE/booklet2.pdf.
- Knapp, C. (2001). Lasting lessons: A teacher's guide to reflection on experience. Charleston, WV: Clearinghouse of Rural Education and Small Schools.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall
- National Educational policy (2020). Retrieved from https://www.mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/nep/NEP_Final_English.pdf retrieved on 10/08/2020
- National Curriculum Framework for School Education 2023.Retrieved from https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NCF-School-Education-Pre-Draft.pdf
- Rogers, C. (1969). Freedom to learn. (3rd ed.). Columbus, OH: Merrill / Mac Million.
- Sarkar, D. (2022). NEP 2020 holistic education to reboot Society. The New Indian Express. Retrieved from http://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2022/jul/28/nep-2020- holistic-education-to-reboot-society-2481715.html#:~:text=increasingly%20complex %20worl
- Silberman,M.(2017). The handbook of experiential learning. Wiley&Son
- Zurbrick, P. R. (1990). Experiential Education. The Agricultural Education Magazine, 62(12), 321-341.