

# Experiential Learning: A Transformative Pedagogical Approach for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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## ABSTRACT

One of the most important pillars for achieving human potential, fostering social justice, and advancing national development is education. Experiential learning is emphasized in the national education policy (NEP) 2020 in order to change the current Indian educational model and bring it closer to the internationally recognized standards that will allow students to use what they've learned in real-world situations. One dynamic classroom method that offers a potential substitute for memory strategies is experiential learning. In today's cutthroat and intricate learning environment the experiential learning method has a proven value and is more pertinent. This approach will encourage instructors and students to embrace diversity in the classroom. NEP (2020) recommends a hands-on experiential learning technique for conceptual and practical knowledge, which frequently encourages learners to investigate issues for holistic learning and understanding across all disciplines (interdisciplinary approach). Students would have a more meaningful, comprehensive, and cogent learning experience if experiential and multidisciplinary learning approaches will implemented. This paper will highlight the characteristics, importance, significance of experiential learning in context to NEP (2020).

**Keywords:** Experiential learning, NEP2020, learning environment, current education system

## INTRODUCTION

Education is a powerful tool for our learning process, whereby our collective information, abilities, values, beliefs, and habits are continuously transmitted from one generation to the next the sake of human survival. Education gives people the tools to accomplish all of their life's predetermined objectives. The nation's most effective tool for progress is education. The primary purpose of education is to give children the skills they need to face life's obstacles, in addition to facilitating their acquisition of knowledge. In line with previous programs, the National Education Policy (2020) highlights that the goal of education is to create good students with the capacity to think and act rationally, show compassion and empathy, be brave, have a scientific temperament, and uphold moral principles Given the significance of education in schools, NEP, 2020 has made numerous proposals, with a focus on reorganizing the curriculum and pedagogy to make it more pertinent and sensitive to students' developmental need and experience-based learning will be embraced as the normative teaching approach for all subjects.

Dhall (2017) reported that in terms of teaching, learning, and serving the actual developmental requirements of the students, the existing educational system has major flaws. These days, experiential

learning is a crucial component of any new, creative pedagogical approaches since it aims to change students' learning from memorization to learning by doing and by personal experience. In order to live a successful life in the real world, skills are really important and intellectual growth and skill development are facilitated by experiential learning. The current educational system deprives youngsters of life skills, which are just as crucial as conceptual knowledge. To instill skills with conceptual understanding, pedagogical reform is urgently needed.

## CONCEPT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

For a sustainable future, experiential education is currently the most important method of student-centered learning. The process through which abilities, information, and qualities are picked up and manifested in actions and output, either intentionally or naturally, is called learning. Through the theory and technique of experiential learning, educators intentionally include students in firsthand experience and concentrated contemplation to broaden their knowledge, their abilities, and make sense of their values. According to Silberman (2007), experiential learning is the process of giving students real-world experiences that enable them to apply what they have learned and provide them the opportunity to reflect on those experiences. Learning from prior experience is the primary focus of experiential learning (Sternberg & Zhang, 2014), this allows students to acquire knowledge through doing, thinking, reflecting, and applying (Butler et al., 2019). The primary goal of this learning is to actively engage with the surroundings in order to gain knowledge, develop new abilities, and understand complex concepts.

### Theoretical framework of Experiential Learning

Term experiential learning in classrooms is not new-fangled. Learning theories that prioritize "learning through experience" or "learning by doing" have their roots in the work of significant educational psychologists like John Dewey (1938), Jean Piaget (1952), Carl Rogers (1969), and David A. Kolbs (1984).

### Kolbs cycle of experiential learning:

The contemporary Experiential Learning Theory was created by Kolb (1984) based on the writings of Lewin (1951) and Dewey (1938). Kolb(1984) asserts that experience is transformed to produce the process of knowledge

Kolbs experiential learning cycle consist of four steps:

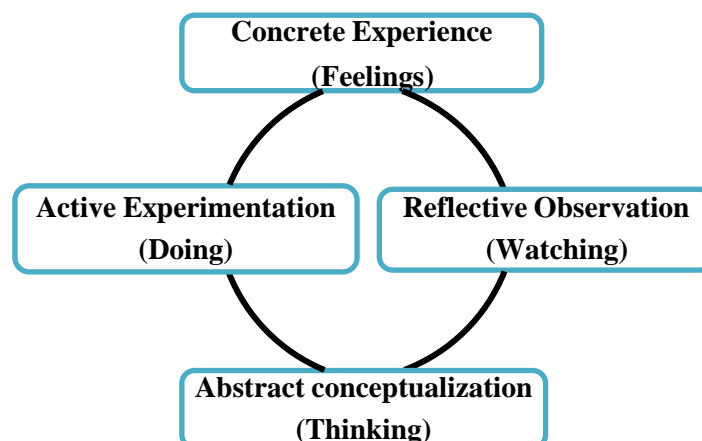


Figure 1. Kolb's Experiential cycle

1. **Concrete experience:** In the first phase of Kolb's experiential learning, students participate in practical experiments linked to a research project, each of which offers a fresh experience.
2. **Reflective observation:** It involves thinking back on our experiences, both positive and negative. It is a chance to reflect on what worked well, what may be improved, and explore alternative strategies.
3. **Abstract conceptualization:** That's when we make plans and generate ideas for successful moves. Students who reflect come up with new ideas or change preexisting concepts;
4. **Active experimentation:** It is the process by which we test our theories and strategies in practical situations.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Researcher has reviewed some study related to the Experiential learning :

**Sangwan, K. S., & Singh, R. (2022)** indicated that one of the required abilities for engineering graduates to have a solid foundation in the professional world is problem solving skills (PSS), which is a crucial part of learning outcomes. The theory (idea) and practice (process) of PSS must be well understood and integrated within the framework of experiential learning (EL).

**Kularatne, W., Dissawa, L. H., Ekanayake, T., & Ekanayake, J. B. (2022)** reported that when the experiments in laboratory was carried out as outlined in this research, students' performance improved, according to a comparison of their performance before and after the online distribution method.

**Tong, D. T., Loc, N. P., Uyen, B. P., & Cuong, P. H. (2020)** reported according to the results, that the experimental group done better in mathematics than the control group and also showed a positive attitude toward learning as well as a strong interest in the material.

**Cheng, S. C. et al. (2019)** conducted study on mobile technology-enabled experiential learning system was created to enhance students' problem-solving skills, learning outcomes, attitudes, and group effectiveness. Experimental findings show that the adopted strategy can greatly improve students' learning outcomes, attitudes toward the environment, and group efficacy. Additionally, more problem-solving abilities were displayed by students who employed the implemented technique than by those who employed the conventional situated mobile learning strategy..

**Dolotallas, A. C. (2016)** reported that students performance was improved by the use of the experiential learning approach. In order to enhance students' performance, the study suggested that incorporation of the experiential learning approach into additional subjects.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

A number of essential components set experiential learning apart from more conventional educational approaches. These characteristics are essential for maximizing learning outcomes and releasing learners' potential.

1. **Hands on Activities:** Through practical exercises, students actively engage with the material as part of experiential learning. Field visits, simulations, experiments, and real-world projects may all fall under this category. Through hands-on engagement with the content, students can enhance their comprehension and acquire useful abilities.
2. **Learner –centered:** The unique needs and interests of every learner are the main focus of experiential learning, which is learner-centered. Because it understands that everyone has distinct learning preferences and styles, it provides a range of activities to meet these various demands.
3. **Real-world relevance:** The main focus of experiential learning is on using knowledge in practical settings. Engaging with real-world situations allows students to see how their learning is applicable in real-world situations. In addition to improving their comprehension, this also gets them ready for

obstacles in real life.

4. **Active engagement:** Active participation, teamwork, and experimentation are all encouraged by experiential learning. By doing this, they acquire practical abilities that they can use right away and acquire a greater comprehension of the subject topic. This active participation encourages problem-solving, critical thinking, and the use of information in practical settings.

## **ROLE OF TEACHERS AND STUDENTS IN INTEGRATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN CLASSROOMS**

A student-centered method that prioritizes active, hands-on participation in the learning process is experiential learning. With this method, teachers and students each have certain duties to play in enhancing the learning process.

### **Teacher's role :**

- **Facilitator:** Instead of lecturing, the teacher facilitates or guides the learning process. Through exercises, experiments, or practical experiences, they give students the chance to interact directly with the material. (Wurdinger & Carlson, 2010).
- **Providing Structure and Support:** In addition to promoting student independence and initiative, teachers also offer guidance and assistance to guarantee that the learning activities meet the goals of the curriculum. They provide tools, advice, and comments to help students successfully traverse the learning process.
- **Assessment and Evaluation:** Teachers use a variety of techniques to evaluate their students' learning, such as portfolios, projects, presentations, conversations, and observations. Along with assessing knowledge and skill gain, they also assess how well learning is applied in real-world situations.
- **Designing Learning Experiences:** Teachers plan and coordinate lessons that encourage reflection, critical thinking, and active engagement. They create exercises that let students investigate ideas, work through issues, and make inferences based on personal experience.
- **Subject Expert:** Teachers assist students in organizing and relating their thoughts to the body of information by acting as subject matter experts. They frequently model and promote critical thinking as part of their instruction.

### **Student's role:**

The student roles listed below are taken from Wurdinger & Carlson (2010). These are

- Students will work on issues that are societal, personal, and practical.
- As long as students are making progress in their studies, they will be given more freedom in the classroom.
- Students' self-assessment of their learning progress or achievement serves as the main method of evaluation.
- The process of learning will teach the students to be adaptable. This shift entails learning to study (research) and learn from real-world experiences, being less dependent on the teacher and more dependent on peers, and being able to critically assess one's own performance.
- During their learning process, students will frequently need to engage with complex and demanding situations.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Some years back, the primary goal of our conventional educational system was cramming, but modern educational system places more emphasis on an activity-centered curriculum. Based on this, experiential learning is essential to the modern teaching and learning process. Students can engage in real-world, contemporary scenarios during experiential learning, which gives them the time and space to do so. It has been frequently demonstrated that students learn better when they integrate new experiences with prior ones through practical exercises and reflection (Presthold & Fletcher, 2018). In order to make teaching-learning more meaningful, engaging, and successful, it is recommended that even in-service teachers receive orientation or refresher courses based on the newest pedagogical methods, such as experiential learning strategies, rather than just pre-service teachers. This is because the education system urgently needs to revamp its pedagogical approach (Chopra, 2023).

### **Importance of Experiential Learning in current Education System:**

The power of experiential learning to meaningfully engage, motivate, and challenge students makes it significant in influencing the educational environment and equipping students to succeed in the twenty-first century. It is important because

- **Students can better grasp concepts:**

Concepts that aren't relevant to the "real world" may be difficult for students to understand. Students get the chance to apply information and concepts in a real-world setting where they can actively participate through experiential learning. The content becomes tangible to the student as they engage with it.

- **Students' mistakes become valuable experiences:**

During practical exercises, students will learn which approaches are more successful than others. Students learn to appreciate errors rather than to be afraid of them.

- **Students have the opportunity to be more creative**

One of the best methods for teaching creative problem-solving is experiential learning. Children are inspired to find their own answer to practical problems and learn that there are several ways to solve problems through real-world content.

- **Teachers often observe improved attitudes toward learning**

In addition to improving students' knowledge and abilities, experiential learning aims to pique their emotions. If students take an active role in the process, they might be happier with their education.

## CONTEXTUALIZING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN RELATION TO NEP (2020)

The National Education Policy NEP (2020), which placed a strong focus on experiential learning, brought about a paradigm shift in Indian education. This approach places students at the center of the learning process, going beyond rote memory and passive learning. In order to accomplish the goals set forth in the NEP (2020), experiential learning is essential, and this innovative strategy for India acknowledges the necessity for a comprehensive and a groundbreaking method of teaching in education system. Lets explore its transforming impact on current educational system according to NEP (2020):

- **Turning Attention on Application Instead of Content Delivery:**

The NEP highlights the significance of switching from content-centric to competency-based learning. For this reason, experiential learning—which emphasizes applying knowledge to actual situations—is a good fit. When students actively engage with concepts and relate them to real-world situations, they gain a greater understanding of them.



- **Combining Technology with Immersion Education:**

NEP 2020 recognized the use of technology in education and it is possible to enhance experiential learning by integrating educational technologies such as virtual reality, simulations, and online platforms.

- **Holistic Development:**

Beyond academic success, NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of student's holistic development. It encourages creativity, empathy, flexibility, and resilience. Through practical learning, students acquire life skills essential to their career and personal growth (Sarkar, 2022).

- **Linking Theory and Practice:**

Experiential learning helps in closing the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application. As a result, students are more equipped to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations. This encourages lifelong learning and gets students ready for their careers.

- **Fostering Communication and Collaboration:**

Experiential learning frequently involves collaborative activities in which students work in groups to accomplish objectives. These develop communication, cooperation, and interpersonal skills. Students learn how to listen, negotiate, respect other people's opinions, and effectively express their thoughts.

- **Multidisciplinary Approach:**

By promoting a multidisciplinary approach to education, the strategy enables students to investigate a wide range of topics and passions. This method is naturally supported by experiential learning, which gives students the chance to apply their knowledge from different fields in practical settings.

- **Fosters problem-solving skills and critical thinking:**

By exposing students to real-world problems, experiential learning develops their critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. By exposing students to genuine problems, motivating them to assess circumstances, and fostering creative thinking students will be able to grasp things better.

## CONCLUSION

An efficient teaching method, experiential learning encourages in-depth understanding, skill development, and personal development through real-world experiences, reflection, and application. By giving students the chance to grow in knowledge and put theory into practice through reflective practice, experiential learning can improve student learning. Experiential learning in authentic classroom settings has the potential to promote students' creativity, ability to engage with real-world scenarios, and comprehension of the subject matter. The main advantage is that it aids in the elimination of rote memory, which is a common technique in the majority of the courses taught in our classes. Through experiential learning, students are encouraged to take charge of their education, connect theory to practice, and build the skills necessary to thrive in a variety of personal and professional contexts. Inclusion of experiential learning in the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020's is a revolutionary step in the direction of a more complete and effective educational system. The policy encourages collaboration, curiosity, and hands-on research, all of which contribute to a passion of lifelong learning.

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