



Experiential Learning in School Education: Prospects and Challenges

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Abstract

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes experiential learning to reform the current Indian education pattern and align it more with the globally accepted educational standard which would help students apply their knowledge in real-world situations. But due to the large-scale heterogeneity in Indian classrooms and other factors, teachers face challenges to cater the needs of all learners together. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explore the challenges faced by teachers to incorporate experiential learning in schools. Based on the analysis of the review of related literature and previous research findings in the field of experiential learning, this article highlights the significance of experiential learning, challenges in the effective implementation of experiential learning in the teaching-learning process, and some suggestive measures to overcome these challenges. Although several initiatives have been taken by Govt. of India to promote the implementation of experiential learning in school education, still it takes sincere attention in this regard.

Keywords: Experiential learning, prospects, challenges, school education

Introduction

Education is an important tool that aids in the creation of a well-developed and progressive nation. The progress of the nation depends upon its quality of education. As the primary source of knowledge, schools play a significant role in shaping a country's future by promoting the holistic growth of its future citizens. The aim of school education will be to provide the highest quality education to the students (NEP, 2020) because the foundation to build a bright future begins at the school level. Considering the importance of school education NEP, 2020 has made a lot of recommendations, emphasis on restructuring the pedagogical and curricular structure to make it relevant and responsive to the developmental requirements of learners. Covering ages from 6-18 (Grade 1-12) years of children will be considered learners belonging to school education and their learning should be enjoyable, integrated, and holistic. Earlier, schools were considered places where learning is acquired through the traditional method

which were lecture method, recitation, rote learning, etc. (Sharma, 2022). But based on the demand of the present time situation knowledge of content is not enough for the holistic development of the learners. Various policy documents stressed the need for pedagogical reforms at all stages of school education that would move away from the prevalent culture of rote learning and towards actual understanding and learning how to learn (NCF 2005, NFG 2006 & NEP 2020). Therefore, NEP 2020 highlighted that experiential learning will be adopted as standard pedagogy for every subject at all stages, with an exploration of relations among different subjects. Today experiential learning has become an essential method in all new innovative pedagogical practices as it holistically strives to shift the learning of students from rote learning to learning by doing and by self-experience. However, many initiatives had been taken by India's state and central governments to incorporate experiential learning in school education to emphasize learning by doing and

reflecting on the experiences (CBSE, 2019). Despite many efforts that have been taken by state and central governments to ensure experiential learning is incorporated into school education no such evidence was found regarding the effective implementation of experiential learning yet. Additionally, a general view of the present education system reveals that many challenges in school education hamper the incorporation of such innovative practices.

What is Experiential Learning?

Experiential learning is not a new concept. The roots of experiential learning are profound. They go ahead from Aristotle to Buddha, from biological phenomenon to trending on the right pathway in daily life by leaving the customary path. Theories of philosophical pragmatism propounded by John Dewey, social psychology theory by Kurt Lewin, learning during the process of learning by Carl Rogers, Montessori method by Maria Montessori, and cognitive theory by Jean Piaget provide the integrated model of learning from experiences. John Dewey is the one who attributed the concept of experiential learning for the first time in the year 1938. Dewey contends that for education to be progressive there has to be an experiential component to the lesson later evolved in work by Lewin, Piaget, Roger, Montessori, and Kolb. They all believed that students need to experience the lesson by being involved and not just as passive participants. Rogers (1969) believed that experiential learning includes applied knowledge which is more meaningful for the students. David Kolb (1984) also emphasized that concrete experiences are essential to meaningful learning. As a result, the student is the central point of experiential learning, and learning (the knowledge acquired) occurs as a result of personal involvement in this pedagogical approach.

Experiential learning emphasizes the practical application of knowledge and abilities to situations encountered in everyday life to advance students' understanding and help them to become competent in their skills and behaviour. Experiential learning may be summed up

as "challenge and experience followed by reflection leading to learning and growth," according to the Association for Experiential Education. Experiential learning is described by UNESCO as a process that creates knowledge, skills, and attitudes based on deliberate reflection on an experience. So, learning by doing, learning by action, learning through experience, and learning through discovery and exploration are all terms used to describe the experiential learning approach. It is more clearly defined as "learning by reflection or doing" and is the process of learning through experience. Father of contemporary experiential education John Dewey frequently advocated for experience as an important element of learning, believing that learning through experience or by doing is a key component of achieving academic success. According to Piaget (1973), an individual's experience is transformed through an energetic process that fosters knowledge of events and the development of the individual's creative abilities. Learning is a cycle that starts with experience, continues with reflection, and later moves into action, which then transforms into a concrete experience of reflection. Therefore, learning is "the process whereby knowledge is formed through the transformation of experience" (Kolb,1984). Kolb's experiential learning model is divided into four stages that include concrete experiences are facilitated for learning followed by steps of reflective observation and abstract conceptualization. The last step of active experimentation taken up by students is based on the learning completed in the earlier three steps. Experiential learning is the process of involving students in real-world experiences that allow them to apply what they have learned and provides them with the chance to reflect on those experiences (Silberman, 2007).

Significance of Experiential Learning

1. Experiential learning is the process of learning by doing. It is an effective strategy for involving students and ensuring that they are learning deeply. It allows real-world experience and a better ability to connect the

knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations.

2. Experiential learning allows reflection on the experiences the students have and builds deep connections with conceptual classroom topics. Such discussion renders the abstract ideas and knowledge taught in the classroom pertinent and relatable.
3. Experiential learning allows the students to interact effectively, be curious, & creative, verify their hypotheses, and actively apply their past knowledge to acquire new knowledge.
4. Experiential Learning strives to place the student at the center of the learning environment. Students may think critically, make decisions, and master knowledge by constructing themselves.

Challenges of Experiential Learning in School Education:

1. **Insufficient Time and Inadequate Resources:** Teachers face difficulties in creating a real-world learning environment and accessing rich experiential learning activities where students get plenty of opportunities to be exposed to direct or indirect concrete experiences within the limited time and resources that are available in the schools particularly in schools of rural settings because basic requirements are also not available there like proper spacing in and outside the classroom, laboratory,

proper sitting arrangement, etc. (Aggarwal & Wu 2019).

2. **Traditional Assessment Process:** Experiential learning is useless if it cannot give students an opportunity for reflection and application. Teachers find it challenging to determine the best ways to evaluate students' learning both during and after the experience since school officials usually employ the outdated "paper-pencil test" method to assess students' learning outcomes.
3. **Lack of Experiential Curriculum:** Teachers face difficulties in designing their lesson plan based on experiential learning because the content is more theoretical and not designed in a way where incorporating experiential learning activities is easy mostly in subjects like History, Sanskrit, etc. at the school level.
4. **Lack of Quality Teachers and Professional Development:** Teachers face difficulties in using such practices in their teaching-learning process because they are even not aware of innovations and trends. They follow the pure traditional approach of teaching (Chalk and talk method). Teachers just hesitate to use such innovative practices because of a lack of knowledge of how to manage the students' activities in plans of experiential learning, and professional development.

Factor	Concerns [Description]
Time	Seerat (2014), and Rani & Shivani (2021), reported that experiential learning is difficult to use in a limited given time. Giving practical experiences and having students' reflections on their experience, need time to design and implement.
Inadequate equipment and Space	Lack of facilities for carrying out practical work, lack of space for outdoor and indoor activities, and even no proper furniture, laboratories, and other basic equipment act as a hurdle to implementing experiential learning (Nooghabi, Irvani & Fami, 2011). Difficulties in accessing experiential learning opportunities for teachers to implement particularly in rural areas are very challenging because of the lack of basic resources and facilities (Katherine McDougal, 2014).
Lack of Quality Teachers	Lack of teacher knowledge about the latest skills, devices, innovations, and skills for practicum/practical tasks and field visits, and any other experiential activity is a barrier to using experiential learning (Nooghabi, Irvani & Fami, 2011; Rani & Shivani, 2021).

Lack of Continuous Professional Development of Teachers	Reddipalli and Rajeshbabu (2018) highlighted that not all units are suitable to design based on experiential learning in terms of the teacher's expertise. Providing ample opportunities to teachers for their self-development and updating their knowledge and skills to the innovations (Singh & Shakir 2019; Hossain 2021).
Institutional Efforts	Lack of flexibility in the time schedule, rigid rules, and regulations, and less coordination with community, villages, etc. also act as a barrier for the smooth implementation of experiential learning in school (Nooghabi, Irvani & Fami, 2011; Katherine Mc Dougal, 2014)
Traditional Assessment Process	Katherine McDougal (2014) found that while teaching through an experiential learning approach it is tough to assess student's learning through a traditional assessment system. Nooghabi, Iranvi & Fami (2011) also revealed that a lack of a separate evaluation system for practical credits is required for assessing learning.

Experiential Learning in School Education: Suggestive Measures

1. First, teachers need to be familiar with the tenets of experiential learning in order to successfully integrate it into social science classes. When it is not possible to carry out real things in an exciting way, there is no need to organize activities outside of the classroom to further complicate the use of experiential learning. To give students experiential learning, teachers also employ a variety of techniques other than field visits, such as project work, simulations, role-playing, etc.
2. Teachers must employ technology to enhance experiential learning by providing students with real-world experiences through documentaries, particularly in studying history, where it is exceedingly challenging to create genuine objects.
3. Lesson plans should be prepared based on experiential learning and proper time should be given for their presentation for making it more effective.
4. To keep up with pedagogical transformation or advances, teachers must take part in professional development programmes, refresher courses, training programmes, etc. time to time.

Conclusion:

The National Education Policy 2020 focus on experiential learning in school education for conceptual understanding rather than rote learning. But due to the sheer number of obstacles, implementing

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an experiential learning approach in the teaching-learning process at the school level is quite challenging. One of the main challenges in conducting experiential learning is the unavailability of basic requirements like insufficient time and inadequate resources. Lack of quality teachers, traditional assessment process, and lack of teachers' interest also present challenges to incorporating experiential learning opportunities with high quality. The government needs to give sincere attention to the concerns to solve the problem.

Recommendations:

1. The standard of teacher training institutions needs to be improved, and the selection process for teachers needs to be strict and objective.
2. Provision should be made in teacher-education programs to explore the possibilities of practicing innovative teaching approaches/methods and innovative models like Kolb's Experiential Learning Model based on established theories.
3. For experiential educators, a new kind of curriculum needs to be created, one that gives them all the tools they need to use, including a visual illustration of how to employ those tools effectively, as well as a selection evaluation tool to determine which components of the curriculum are the most effective, what can be improved, and what needs to be altered to fit a particular school.
4. Professional development programmes for schoolteachers need to be mandatory for updating their knowledge and skills.

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