

Vivification of Experiential Learning with Reference to NEP 2020

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ABSTRACT

Education is a fundamental pillar for realizing full human potential, creating an equitable society, and improving the development of a nation. National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides a special focus on the experiential learning approach. The worth of the experiential approach is well-established and has more relevance in today's competitive and complex learning environment. This method will help in motivating both students and teachers to respond to the diversity in the classrooms. As such this approach encourages hands-on experience, critical thinking, problem-solving approach, and learning by doing and empowers a deep engagement with the curriculum. However, the aim of NEP 2020 is to provide practical and holistic education that will prepare the learners for the future and accordingly NEP 2020 recommended that, "Pedagogy must evolve to make education more experiential, holistic, integrated, inquiry-based, competency-based, discussion-based, flexible and learner-centered". The study will highlight the significance of experiential learning in teaching and learning with reference to NEP 2020.

Keywords: *Experiential Learning, NEP 2020, Teaching, Pedagogy*

Simon Fraser University defines experiential learning as: "*the strategic, active engagement of students in opportunities to learn through doing, and reflection on those activities, which empowers them to apply their theoretical knowledge to practical endeavors in a multitude of settings inside and outside of the classroom*".

Learning is a continuous process that goes from cradle to grave. In every phase of life learning takes place for example we learn as students, teachers, parents, educators, and as humans. Experience has a significant role to play in the overall learning process because most of the things we learn are from our own experiences or the experiences of other people. Experiential learning has been an important pedagogy for a long time. With the increased significance and thrust in education for acquiring 21st century skills experiential learning has gained momentum. Experiential learning mainly involves actively interacting with the environment to acquire information, and skills, and comprehend difficult ideas. It is an investigative method that prioritizes practical, hands-on experience, introspection, and critical thinking. Experiential learning offers a more efficient means of navigating

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Vivification of Experiential Learning with Reference to NEP 2020

complexity and ambiguity by enabling students to interact with real-world issues and get a better comprehension of their root causes and possible remedies. Experiential learning and inquiry in a complex world stress the need for active contact with the environment, they are closely connected. Through the use of experiential learning, learners may delve deeper into the dynamics and underlying causes of complicated situations and problems, as well as improve critical thinking abilities. This may result in improved decision-making, more efficient problem-solving, and a higher capacity to deal with complexity and ambiguity in the outside environment (Sachdeva & Latesh, 2023). It promotes flexible learning, integrates various modalities of learning into full-cycle learning, and develops useful skills and meta-learning capabilities (Kolb & Kolb, 2017).

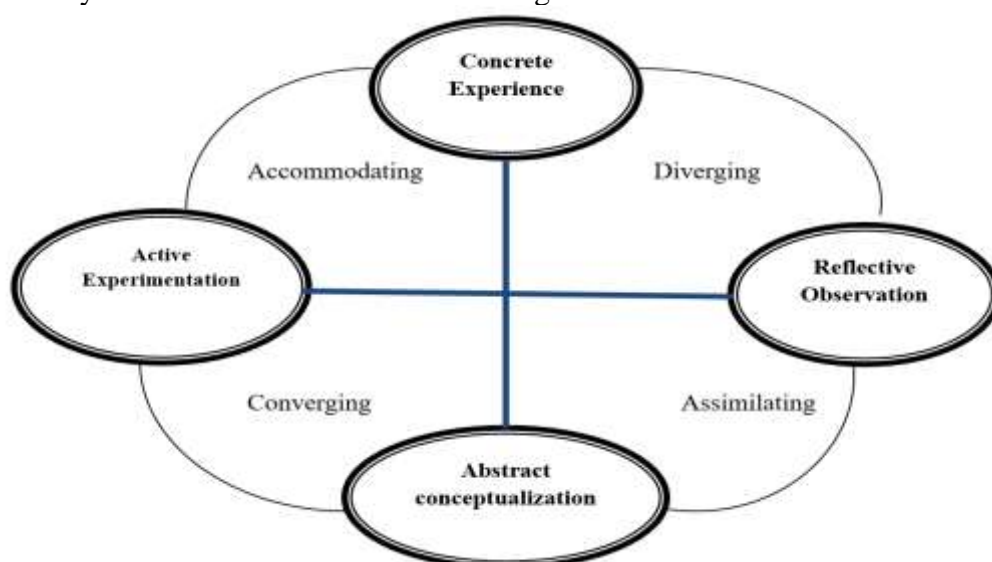
Research Question: To analysis the significance of experiential learning in teaching and learning with context to NEP 2020.

Research Method: Researchers have chosen to employ the content analysis method, primarily qualitative, to accentuate the importance of experiential learning in the current context by utilizing secondary sources of data.

Theoretical Background of Experiential Learning

Originally the concept of experiential learning was developed by Kolb in 1984 but he claims that Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, and John Dewey are the real founding fathers of this concept. Further work on this concept is done by Carl Jung and Erik Erikson and radical educators like Paulo Freire and Ivan Illich, as well as by humanistic psychologists like Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow (Kolb, 1984). Experiential learning's main emphasis is on learning through prior experience (Sternberg & Zhang, 2014) and it allows students to learn by doing, reflecting, thinking, and applying (Butler et al., 2019). Students often get engaged in concrete experience (Do), duplicate it and additional data (Reflect), and develop hypotheses that are consistent with experiences and knowledge (Think), and state a presumption or clarify an issue (Apply). So, it is an effective tool for improving academic instruction by enabling students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real-world issues (Guo et al., 2016).

Apart from this Kolb has also worked on learning orientations or modes and learning styles. These styles are mentioned in the below diagram.



Vivification of Experiential Learning with Reference to NEP 2020

The main learning orientation on which he has laid emphasis is Concrete experience orientation (learners with such orientation laid more emphasis on immediate experiences that occur in a specific time and place). Reflective Observation (Learners take an inductive approach and have different perspectives), Abstract conceptualization (Learner's values analysis and precision also take a deductive approach), and Active experimentation (learners mainly learn through acting, creating specific plans, implementing plans, and discovering), and the four learning styles are Convergent which focuses on the abstract conceptualization, active experimentation, problem-solving and decision making (Kolb, 2015, p.114). Divergent, which places a strong focus on real experience and introspective observation, imaginative ability, and awareness of meaning and values (Kolb, 2015. p.115). Assimilation emphasizes contemplative observation and abstract conceptualization, inductive reasoning, and theoretical model creation (Kolb, 2015. p.115). Accommodative which emphasizes practical experience and active experimentation, plans, tasks, and new experiences (Kolb, 2015, p. 115).

Why Experiential Learning Matters

Experiential learning matters because of its capability to engage, inspire, and challenge students in meaningful ways, becoming a driving force in shaping the educational landscape and preparing students for success in the 21st century. Nowadays, through experiential learning, educational institutions are creating dynamic, immersive, and hands-on learning experiences that empower students to explore, experiment, and discover. Research suggests that active involvement in the learning process enhances knowledge retention. Experiential learning allows students to apply concepts in meaningful ways, reinforcing their understanding and memory of the material. It engages students in authentic, real-world experiences that cultivate their knowledge, skills, and character. Education is no longer confined to the four walls of a classroom. Today, institutions are embracing a powerful approach that brings the curriculum to life through hands-on experiences. Experiential learning often involves a holistic approach, integrating cognitive, emotional, and social aspects of learning. It promotes a deeper understanding of the subject matter and encourages the development of well-rounded individuals.

Relevance of Experiential Learning in Present Teaching Learning Process

A few years ago, the focus of our traditional educational system was primarily on subject cramming but as far as the contemporary system of education is concerned here more emphasis is laid on activity centered curriculum so in this context experiential learning has a crucial role to play in the modern teaching and learning process. Role plays, games, case studies, critical events, simulations such as "in-box" exercises, socio-drama, and activities that clarify values are the major experiential learning strategies used in present classrooms. Students may digest real-life situations, try out novel behaviors, and get feedback in a secure setting in experiential classrooms. Assignments about experiential learning assist students in connecting theory to practice and evaluating actual circumstances in light of the course content. Claxton (1990) described a range of teaching strategies that will support each of Kolb's learning modes like recalling prior events or assuming a part in them might elicit concrete sensations, play, case studies, group discussions, reflective papers, and journals foster reflective observation, and inspire abstract conceptualization. Apart from this experiential learning helps in understanding the concepts, complex processes, and ideas in a better way, enhances critical thinking, and the ability to apply the concepts learned in real-life situations. Teaching pedagogy has changed a lot as a result of experiential learning, moving from scoring to knowing, comprehending, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and producing. In all stages, NEP 2020 recommended that "experiential learning will be

adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects”. Experiential learning provides students the time and space to participate in the process of learning by engaging in real, modern situations. Via hands-on activities and reflection, students can assimilate new experiences with previous ones, and it has been repeatedly shown to improve student learning (Presthold & Fletcher, 2018). The heart of all learning is the way we process our experiences, especially our critical reflections on our experiences. Nowadays experiential education is considered a key approach to student-centered learning for a sustainable future. Experiential learning acknowledges that learning through experience supports students in formulating and solving problems in different ways in unpredictable situations. Along with this students like to engage in the learning when they find value in their learning, desired outcomes, believe to be successful, and perceive a supportive environment. So, it is the need of the hour that the education system should redesign its pedagogical approach not for pre-service teachers but It is suggested that even in-service teachers should be given orientation/refresher courses on the latest pedagogical approaches like Experiential Learning strategies to make teaching-learning more meaningful, interesting and effective (Chopra, 2023).

Experiential Learning in Context to NEP 2020

The National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 in many ways aligns with the principles and significance of experiential learning. This visionary policy for India recognizes the need for a holistic and transformative approach to education, and experiential learning plays a crucial role in achieving the objectives outlined in the NEP. Let's explore the significance of experiential learning in the context of the National Education Policy 2020.

- 1. Holistic Development:** Holistic development refers to a learner's social and academic maturity to accept the challenges of life. It prepares a learner for lifelong learning (Sarkar, 2022). A holistic approach to education is a blessing, and nurturing the development of the mind, body, and spirit. NEP 2020 emphasizes the holistic development of students, going beyond academic achievements to include life skills, critical thinking, creativity, problem-solving, and Experiential learning, by its nature, fosters holistic development through hands-on experiences, students gain practical skills, develops emotional intelligence, and learn to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios. Therefore, “Holistic Education is the Soul of National Education Policy 2020”.
- 2. Skill and Vocational Education:** NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of skill development and vocational education from an early age. Experiential learning is instrumental in skill development as it encourages students to engage in practical activities, internships, and projects that enhance both soft and hard skills.
- 3. Multidisciplinary Approach:** The policy encourages a multidisciplinary approach to learning, allowing students to explore diverse subjects and areas of interest. Experiential learning naturally supports this approach by providing opportunities for students to integrate knowledge from various disciplines in real-world contexts.
- 4. Focus on Critical Thinking and Problem Solving:** NEP 2020 emphasizes the importance of nurturing critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Experiential learning is designed to promote these skills by presenting students with real challenges, encouraging them to analyze situations, and developing innovative solutions.
- 5. Flexible Learning Paths:** The policy acknowledges the need for flexibility in the education system to accommodate different learning styles and paces. Experiential

Vivification of Experiential Learning with Reference to NEP 2020

learning is inherently flexible, allowing students to progress at their own pace, explore areas of interest, and customize their learning journey.

- 6. Teacher Training and Professional Development:** NEP 2020 highlights the need for continuous teacher training and professional development. Experiential learning requires a shift in teaching methods, and teacher training becomes essential to effectively implement and facilitate experiential learning activities in the classroom.

Thus, with a focus on practical, application-oriented education, NEP 2020 aims to revitalize experiential learning. Incorporating technology, real-world experiences, and a flexible curriculum, the strategy seeks to equip students for 21st-century challenges and cultivate a passion for lifelong learning.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

From the above-cited literature, the concept of experiential learning is not a new approach to education, but it suggests a new analysis of the way that education is organized in our classrooms. It suggests that rather than the teacher, the student should be at the heart of the classroom activities that educators are employing an increasing number of techniques to engage students in field-based learning experiences, group projects, interdisciplinary research, reflection, and self-analysis. Experiential Learning is a method of teaching that allows learners to learn while "Do, Reflect, Think and Apply" (Butler et al., 2019). The study investigated several essential areas for experiential learning in actual classroom settings, which can surely help students develop creativity, critical thinking, engagement with real-world events, and concept comprehension. In today's ever-changing world, the value of education is constantly questioned. Experiential learning allows you to demonstrate your ability to learn, increasing your chances of getting work. The inclusion of experiential learning in National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is a revolutionary step toward a more comprehensive and successful educational system. NEP 2020 acknowledges the significance of the all-round development of the people by focusing on theoretical knowledge and practical abilities. In addition to improving academic comprehension, experiential learning also encourages critical thinking, creativity, and adaptability qualities that are crucial in the fast-paced, dynamic world of today. NEP 2020 focus on experiential learning is a reflection of its dedication to developing students who can apply their knowledge with ease in a variety of situations. The policy also fosters a love of lifelong learning by promoting teamwork, curiosity, and practical investigation. The incorporation of experiential learning into NEP 2020 deepens students' knowledge about their subject and also ignites their passion for learning with its ability to prepare students not just for tests but also for the plethora of possibilities and challenges that lie outside of the classroom; this all-encompassing strategy has the potential to completely transform the educational process.

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Vivification of Experiential Learning with Reference to NEP 2020

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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