

Experiential Learning in School Internship: Reflection of Prospective Teachers

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ABSTRACT

The study aims to explore the reflections of prospective teachers in using experiential learning approach in their classroom during internship. Qualitative research method was used to conduct the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the participants and semi-structured one-on-one face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect the data. The data was analyzed in percentage and summarized in five themes (knowledge, understanding towards its use, perceived learning experiences, perceived teaching effectiveness, and usability & infrastructure) related to the reflections of prospective teachers. The findings of the study revealed that prospective teachers have proper knowledge and understanding of experiential learning approach in their teaching-learning process during the internship. Further, the findings also revealed that prospective teachers have effective learning and teaching experiences where prospective Mathematics, Science, and English teachers feel easy to incorporate experiential learning in the teaching-learning process than prospective Social Science teachers. Additionally, prospective teachers have also highlighted the issues and challenges while incorporating experiential learning approach in the classrooms like lack of proper infrastructure facilities, insufficient basic resources, time limit, lack of institutional support, etc, Furthermore, the conclusion and outline for further educational research is also discussed.

Keywords: *Experiential learning, reflections of prospective teachers*

Producing excellent teachers with appropriate content and pedagogical knowledge is the responsibility of teacher education institutions, which will later contribute to ensuring quality education in the country (Mushahari & Sharma, 2022). An effective teaching-learning approach leads to satisfactory learning outcomes, student engagement, useful information and necessary skills, and the ability to connect classroom learning to real-life situations. There have been several advancements made in education to provide a quality education that is important for the era of the 21st century. Still, the problem of rote learning is prevalent in many institutions. To tackle these problems, all educational institutions must provide an immersive learning environment where students can get instruction through hands-on experiences rather than through traditional rote learning. In the 21st century, teachers need to know innovative pedagogical practices to make their students able to meet

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the needs of 21st-century skills. In this regard, NEP 2020 emphasizes using an experiential learning approach across all stages within every subject to shift the culture of rote learning to understanding-based learning and develop a transactional mechanism for their holistic development through engaging the teaching-learning process. Experiential learning approach means a way of learning by doing or experiencing. The essence of experiential learning is to reflect upon the having or doing experiences. John Dewey coined the term experiential learning for the first time. According to John Dewey (1938), “Experiential Learning takes place when a person involved in an activity looks back and evaluates it, determines what was useful or important to remember, and uses this knowledge to perform another activity”. The idea of experiential learning was later developed by Lewin, Roger, Piaget, Kolb, etc. They all believed that students need to participate actively in the teaching-learning process rather than just being passive recipients. Kolb's (1984) model of experiential learning is the latest and, according to Kolb, “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” is experiential learning.

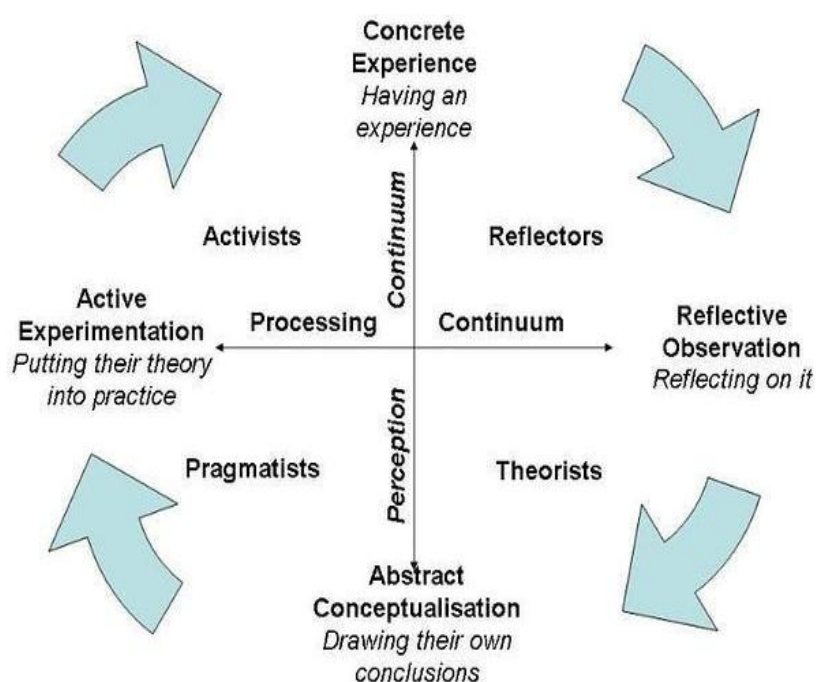


Fig.1.Kolbs' Experiential Learning Model (1984)

Kolb's model of learning is divided into four stages. The facilitation of concrete experiences is followed by reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation in Kolb's model of learning. Between concrete experiences and abstract conceptualization, a grasping experience takes place, and between reflective observation and active experimentation, a transforming experience takes place. The students can start with any stage but they must should complete the four stages to complete the learning cycle. Experiential learning allows the students to be engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully, and physically because the design of experiential learning is based on the possibility of learning from natural consequences, failures, and successes (CBSE, 2019). This involvement creates the impression that the learning assignment is authentic and real (Bartle, 2015). Experiential learning approach provides the platform to gain meaningful learning, where students learn what they experience (Susiloningsih, Sumantri, & Marini, 2023; Chavan, 2011).

Need and Significance of the Study

Experiential learning can help to address pedagogical issues in various disciplines. Using experiential learning in the classroom helps the students with knowledge acquisition and social skill development while supporting the promotion of cultural heritage and traditional values (Voukelatou, 2019). Experiential learning methods also help to increase the motivation towards learning among students in Science, Mathematics, and Political Science by allowing learning through experiences and reflecting upon the experiences (Weinberg, Basile, & Albright, 2011; Adams, 2018; Aagsalog, 2019). Gaining practical experience enhances the level of confidence among students and contributes to their success (Bradberry & Maio, 2018). Experiential learning creates a conducive learning environment that aims to make the education environment student-centered, in which students can master the knowledge by constructing it (CBSE, 2019; Bajpai & Pandey, 2024). It helps to enhance mathematical creativity among learners and helps to increase academic performance in mathematics (Chesimet, Githua, & Ng'eno, 2016; Ogan & Onyeka, 2023). Using experiential learning in the classroom positively impacts students' learning process. It develops collaborative, creative, and problem-solving skills which is an important skill of the 21st century that can be implemented in the everyday life of people (Hasan, et al., 2023; Bajpai & Pandey, 2024). It also encourages them to think, ask questions, and practice specific abilities and attitudes and bridge the gap between classroom learning with real-world applications (CBSE, 2019; Bhardwaj, 2023). Experiential learning continues to be a major consideration in improving learning outcomes and encourages reflection and application of skills and knowledge that goes much beyond the classroom and prepares for a productive life. (CBSE, 2019; Thote & Gowri, 2021). Previous studies show the importance of using experiential learning in the classroom positively affects the knowledge, understanding, and unique skills among students effectively. The studies give insight to prospective teachers for using experiential learning approaches in the classroom to make their teaching-learning process more impactful. Therefore, NCF (2005, 2023) and NEP (2020) have also given suggestions for incorporating experiential learning in the classroom for which teachers can adopt various types of teaching strategies, such as showing videos, role play, field trips, etc. To make all the efforts and vision of policy documents successful, pre-service teachers must employ positive knowledge and attitude towards incorporating experiential learning in their teaching-learning process during the internship because they are the future teachers and they have to prepare their students extraordinarily that they can deal with the 21st-century world. Therefore, because of the importance of incorporating experiential learning, scholarly attention is needed to do research work in this direction. To address the following research question, the present study has been conducted:

- What are the reflections of prospective teachers for using experiential learning in the Classroom during their internship?

Operational Definitions of Key Terms Used:

Reflection of Prospective Teachers

In the present study, reflections of prospective teachers refer to their own experience of using experiential learning in school internship on the five themes namely knowledge, understanding towards its use, perceived learning experiences, perceived teaching effectiveness, and usability and infrastructure.

- **Knowledge-** It refers to prospective teachers' awareness and information regarding experiential learning.
- **Understanding towards its Use-** It refers to the knowledge of prospective teachers on how they design their lessons based on various methods and strategies of experiential learning.

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- **Perceived Learning Experiences-** This refers to prospective teachers' perception of the learning experience of students while using experiential learning in the classroom during a school internship.
- **Perceived Teaching Effectiveness-** It refers to prospective teachers' experience on how much experiential learning is effective for the students to achieve the learning outcomes in the subjects.
- **Usability and Infrastructure-** In the present study, prospective teachers find experiential learning easy to use in the classroom on the available resources and infrastructure facilities.

METHOD

The present study aimed to explore the reflections of prospective teachers towards the use of experiential learning in their school internship. A qualitative research method was used to conduct the study.

Participants

The final year of prospective teachers from Central University of South Bihar who have completed their internship were purposively selected as the participants of the present study.

Tool

A self-made semi-structured interview schedule was used for data collection. Questions of a semi-structured interview were based on the above-mentioned dimension-wise theme to know the reflection of prospective teachers towards using experiential learning in the classroom during internship.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data was collected from prospective teachers through face-to-face interviews. Percentage and manual thematic analysis were done based on the participant's response and interpretation was done as follows:

Theme 1. Knowledge

All prospective teachers know what is experiential learning. Out of 20 prospective teachers, 25% know about experiential learning according to the recommendations of NEP 2020 while 20% of prospective teachers know Kolb's model of experiential learning very well and the remaining 55% of prospective teachers have explained the general definition of experiential learning.

Teachers 1, 19, and 2 *said that experiential learning is an effective approach of teaching where students get the opportunity to learn by doing.* Teachers 11, 12, 3, and 4 *mentioned that experiential learning refers to the method of teaching and learning process where direct or indirect experiences to the students are important and helpful for the students to connect their learning with their real-life situations. Experiential learning is a process of engaging students with hands-on experiences and this approach is very much highlighted in NEP 2020 to be incorporated in every subject at each stage (Teachers 5, 8, 13, 17, and 20). Experiential learning helps learners to learn the concepts by experiencing through various strategies for a better understanding of the concept (Teachers 6, 7, 9, 14). Teachers 10, 15, 16, and 18 express that experiential learning is an effective approach that helps to enhance the level of understanding among students and avoid rote learning and they also define the stages of experiential learning based on Kolb's model.*

Theme 2. Understanding towards its Use

All prospective teachers have a proper understanding of using experiential learning in their classrooms where out of 20 prospective teachers, 80% feel easy to design their lesson based on experiential learning approach whereas 20% of prospective teachers find it difficult to plan their lesson based on experiential learning approach.

Teachers 1, 3, 4, and 11 mentioned that they frequently incorporate experiential learning during the teaching-learning process of mathematics by giving them realistic examples, project methods, brainstorming techniques, etc. Students also enjoy learning and solving problems effectively. Teachers 7, 12, 16, and 20 said that using experiential learning in Social Science is quite challenging. Still, they use this approach by showing PPTs, models, videos, etc. and students get more involved through this approach. Preparing lesson plans based on experiential learning approach in science is easy by using real objects, demonstrations experiments, etc. (Teachers 2, 5, 8, 13, and 20). Teaching grammar and stories through using an experiential learning approach is very interesting and students also become very active in this type of teaching-learning process and perform better than the traditional approach (Teachers 6, 9, 14, and 19). Teacher 15 said that field trips are an effective way to provide direct experiences to the students in chapters like agriculture, etc. Presentation and role-play are also an effective way to provide experiences for the students themselves and present their ideas and learning based on their understanding (Teachers 10 and 17).

Theme 3. Perceived Learning Experiences

Out of 20 prospective teachers, 90% perceived the best learning experience of students but at the same time, 10% of prospective teachers perceived all students do not participate in the activity equally while using experiential learning in the classroom.

Teachers 7, 12, 15, 16, and 20 mentioned that whenever any situational questions were asked from the students, they answered it very effectively which means students became able to apply the concept of Social Science in their real-life situations. Teachers 2, 5, 8, and 13 said that using experiential learning in science classrooms helped the students in increasing their creativity and problem-solving skills after performing the activity of experimentation. Teacher 18 said that students can generate new insights by relating the ideas based on their previous experiences. Experiential learning in English classrooms helped in creating a congenial environment of learning but sometimes students were not ready to perform the assignment in the group because one or two members of the group did not contribute equally but got the praise of performance equal (Teachers 6, 9, 14, and 19). Teachers 1, 3, 4, and 11 mentioned that experiential learning in mathematics helps students to build a deeper understanding of the concepts. Teachers 10 and 17 said that experiential learning enhances the motivation of learning among students.

Theme 4. Perceived Teaching Effectiveness

Out of 20 prospective teachers, 75% were perceived students are able to attain the desired learning outcomes efficiently, whereas 25% of prospective teachers perceive that using experiential learning makes the class unmanageable and also time consuming.

Teachers 1, 7, 8, 11, and 17 said that using experiential learning in the classroom makes the teaching-learning process very interesting and students enjoy the learning. Students are very attentive throughout the class, ask questions, and give their reflections (Teachers- 2, 5, 19, and 12). Students' understanding of the concept also becomes deep and they retain the

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concept for a very long time and most of the students answer the questions whenever they are asked (Teachers 3, 9, and 10). *Experiential learning gives the opportunity to learn by doing and students perform more enthusiastically and complete the given assignment effectively individually and in groups as well, teacher-14. Giving direct or indirect experiences to the students about the content helps them in the development of high-order thinking skills: - critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, etc. (Teachers 16 and 18). However, teachers 4, 6, and 13 said that using experiential learning in the classrooms is very time-consuming and hampers the syllabus completion time. Teachers 15 and 20 although experiential learning is a very effective approach and students are very excited when they are taught through this approach but sometimes it becomes tough to manage the class while using experiential learning.*

Theme 5. Usability and Infrastructure

Out of 20 prospective teachers, 85% of prospective teachers get proper infrastructure and institutional support to use experiential learning in their classrooms, while 15% of prospective teachers do not get adequate resources and facilities to use the approach in the classrooms.

Teachers 7, 16, and 20 *said that resources and infrastructure are not adequate to use experiential learning in Social Science classrooms, while teachers 12 and 15 highlighted that headmasters always support us to use such innovative practices in Social Science teaching. Teachers 2, 5, 8, and 18 mentioned that there are enough resources in the science lab to use experiential learning in the classroom effectively and teacher 13 also highlighted that heads and other teaching staffs encourage them to do so. Experiential learning does not require any extra effort to teach, and the size of a class is also not a problem for us to use experiential learning in the mathematics classroom (Teachers 1, 3, 4, 11, and 17). Teachers 6, 9, 10, 14, and 19 mentioned that experiential learning does not require extra time and efforts to teach English, whereas it is expensive in terms of budget. They also highlighted that the principals and teachers are always motivated to use these practices in their classrooms.*

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Findings of this research study reveal that applying experiential learning in subjects of Science, Maths, English, and Social Science can increase the teaching efficiency of prospective teachers. Students' participation, understanding, retention, performance, etc. were increased by using experiential learning in the teaching-learning process. It has been evidenced from the responses of prospective teachers that students can achieve learning outcomes by sustaining their interest, motivation, high-order thinking skills, etc. when they were taught via experiential learning approach. Thus, use of experiential learning in classrooms helps the prospective teachers as well as students to engross their learning effectively by meeting the needs of today's world. The findings of the study also revealed that, out of 20 prospective teachers, all of them know to implement experiential learning in their classroom effectively by using different pedagogical practices like role-play, field-visit, showing videos, etc. Still, 20% of prospective teachers (Social Sciences) find the use of experiential learning quite challenging in their teaching-learning process because of the nature of the subject. Moreover, 25% of prospective teachers also find difficulties to incorporate experiential learning in their classroom during school internship and highlighted the issues that are unavailability of adequate infrastructure, resources, time constraints, and pressure of syllabus completion. From the key findings and conclusion drawn from the study, it has been suggested that school heads must provide at least basic resources and

facilities to promote experiential learning in the teaching and learning process. Furthermore, they should motivate and encourage prospective teachers to use such innovative practices in their teaching-learning process. Colleges and universities should organize workshops on innovative pedagogies in classroom practices for prospective teachers. Longitudinal and experimental studies are required to be done in that direction by which a support system could be developed for prospective teachers and other stakeholders in the field of education.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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