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Experiential Learning: A Way to Enhance Students' Engagement in Classroom

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Abstract

Experiential learning is a revolutionary method of teaching places a strong emphasis on student engagement, real-world application, and critical thinking to improve the educational process. It fosters deeper comprehension and skill development by bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, drawing on ideas. This strategy fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability through techniques like project-based learning, simulations, internships, and service learning. Experiential learning has been shown to be an effective strategy for capturing students' attention, improving their retention of information, and equipping them for obstacles they may face in the real world, despite its drawbacks, such as resource requirements and evaluation complexity. This paper aims how experiential learning can improve education, stressing its advantages, approaches, and effects on both professional and personal development.

Key terms*: experiential learning, student engagement etc.*

Introduction

Education can be defined in various ways, as it encompasses a broad range of processes, activities, and experiences aimed at facilitating learning and development. The gurukul was India's first system of education. It was a residential schooling system dating back to around 5000 Bc, where shishya (student) and guru (teacher) used to reside in the guru's ashram (home) or in close proximity. This allowed for an emotional bond to be developed prior to the transmission of knowledge. The mode of communication was the ancient Sanskrit language. The way traditional education has been going on for a long time. And the use of traditional education also proved to be quite correct, but at present with experiential learning is being used to develop the curiosity and critical thinking of children. In traditional learning, theoretical part is taught, so the student was not able to use it properly in his life. Therefore, in view of this problem, experiment learning is being used in today's time, which proves to be quite correct at present. In experiment learning, the student himself does hand on activity and experiences it and this work has not been done in some previous studies because only the work and experience done by oneself provides employability in today's time.

Experiential learning is essential to improving the learning process. Critical skills like problem-solving, teamwork, and flexibility are developed as well as a deeper comprehension of subjects by actively involving students in practical exercises, real-world problem-solving, and reflective practices. Therefore, the children experience with the help of experiment learning and academic performance.

Experiential learning

Experiential learning, is an educational approach that emphasizes the importance of hands-on experiences, reflection, and active engagement as effective methods for learning and skill development. This approach is rooted in the idea that individuals learn best when they directly experience and engage with the subject matter, rather than passively receiving information.

"experiential learning is the process of learning by doing. By engaging students in hands-on experiences and reflection, they are better able to connect theories and knowledge learned in the classroom to real-world situations". ***Kent state university***

"experiential learning involves the transformation of experience into effective learning. Kolb's experiential learning theory stresses how our experiences, including our thoughts, emotions and environment, impact the learning process". ***David Kolb's***

In the area of experiential learning, kolb's contributions are well-know. Kolb, who was influenced by other notable theorists such as jean piaget, kurt lewin, and john dewey, published this model in 1984. Concrete learning, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimenting are the four phases of the experiential learning theory. The cycle's first two phases deal with understanding an experience, while the second two stages concentrate on changing an experience. Kolb contends that the learner can enter the cycle at any point and that successful learning is observed as the learner progresses through it.

Experiential learning model by David Kolb: according to kolb (1984), learning is a sequential process that transforms experiences into knowledge. It is evident from kolb's model that there are four different types of experiences or learning cycles, which are described as follows:

I. Concrete experience (feeling): here, the person gains knowledge from specific experiences that are connected to the individuals. It has something to do with the idea or issue. Students actively participate in the process as the teacher gives them tangible experience.

II. Reflective observation (watching): here, the situation is examined from a variety of perspectives before a trustworthy assessment is made. Students are actively participating in experiments, analyzing data, and organizing concepts.

III. Abstract conceptualization (thinking): here, an individual acts based on cognitive knowledge of situations and engages in rational analysis of ideas. At this point, pupils develop ideas about the subject and come to their own definitions.

IV. Active experimentation (doing): here, the learner is focused on completing tasks in their entirety and using their actions to influence others and events. At this point, the student understands the significance of the material and conducts experiments in novel contexts to find life skills.

Traditional learning has a number of drawbacks that have prompted the creation of substitute strategies including experiential learning. The fact that students frequently behave as passive absorbers of knowledge rather than actively participating in the learning process is one of its main disadvantages. This method leaves little opportunity for critical thinking, creativity, or practical application in favor of rote memorization and theoretical information. Furthermore, traditional education is primarily teacher-centered, which may not accommodate different learning preferences or individual needs, frequently making pupils feel alienated or disengaged. In addition to suppressing curiosity, the strict structure and regimented curriculum can also limit possibilities for practical skills development, such as problem-solving or hands-on exploration. These drawbacks made it clear that more dynamic, interactive, and learner-centered techniques were required, opening the door for experiential learning and other cutting-edge teaching strategies.

Differences between traditional learning & experiential learning

	Aspect	Experiential learning	Traditional learning
1	Approach	Hands-on, reflective	Lecture-based, instructional
2	Learners role	Active participant	Passive recipient
3	Focus	Real-world application	Theoretical understanding
4	Environment	Dynamic, practical settings	Structured classroom settings
5	Skill development	Critical thinking, problem-solving, teamwork.	Memorization, analytical skills

Methods of experiential learning activities: there are various provisions for experiential learning activities, which are made available for schools through various schemes. Some such schemes are given as under:

i. **Excursion and field trips:** to bridge the gap between theory and practice, educational field trips and excursions are beneficial. These support the growth of a desire to learn. Even if students have no prior interest in science, exposing them to new experiences helps to spark their interest and keep them interested in the subject (kisiel, 2005).

ii. **Residential camps:** for a week or a month, residential camps—also known as "summer camps"—help provide an open environment for learning. Students are encouraged to challenge the material. These camps are designed to spark children's curiosity. Residential camps provide a nurturing setting for youngsters to develop new skills.

iii. **Activity based learning:** the idea of self-learning is promoted by activity-based learning, which also lets kids study in accordance with their aptitudes. The content is broken up into manageable chunks under this method of instruction, and each student learns at their own pace.

iv. **Vocational education:** manual or practical tasks are the foundation of vocational education and training. Another name for it is technical education. Enhancing young learners' career opportunities and closing the gap between education and practice are the main goals of vocational education.

v. **Kala Utsav:** it was started by the Indian government's ministry of human resource development (MHRD) to promote the arts via education and develop secondary school pupils'

creative and artistic abilities. This is a fantastic attempt to make education more authentic, all-encompassing, creative, and joyful. Numerous kala Utsav-related activities aid kids in learning about, understanding, and raising awareness of Indian culture.

vi. **Project-based learning (PBL)**. Students take part in useful projects that address urgent problems in the real world. This method fosters collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking while giving students the tools they need to take control of their education.

vii. **Science exhibition:** students have a fantastic opportunity to showcase their talents at science competitions and exhibitions. These kinds of exercises assist them in using their abilities, skills, and theoretical knowledge gained from books in a practical way.

Practical examples

1. Science labs & projects.
2. Industry visits & internship.
3. Group projects & case studies.
4. Social and community activities.

Importance of experiential learning

- Experiential learning enables students to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills through active engagement in real-world challenges.
- Experiential learning fosters the holistic development of students by engaging their intellectual, emotional, and practical skills.
- Experiential learning prepares students for careers by providing hands-on experiences and practical skills relevant to the professional world.
- Experiential learning provides students with a personal and meaningful learning experience.
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- Experiential learning helps students build practical skills and improve memory through hands-on, engaging activities.

Challenges of experiential learning

- Experiential learning can be challenging for students due to a lack of resources needed for hands-on activities and real-world applications.
- Balancing theory and practical work
- Students may show resistance to new teaching methodologies like experiential learning due to unfamiliarity or discomfort with active participation.
- Experiential learning can present assessment difficulties as it requires evaluating students' practical skills, reflections, and real-world applications beyond traditional testing methods.
- Students' engagement

Conclusion

Experiential learning is essential to improving the learning process. Critical skills like problem-solving, teamwork, and flexibility are developed as well as a deeper comprehension of subjects by actively involving students in practical exercises, real-world problem-solving, and reflective practices. This method not only improves memory retention but also equips students to handle challenging situations in the actual world. Experiential learning is a crucial part of contemporary education because of its transforming effects on both professional and personal development, even if it necessitates careful organization, resources, and inclusivity.

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