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NEP 2020: emphasizing experiential learning and inquiry-based approaches in higher education

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Abstract
Experiential learning is a type of learning that involves actively engaging with the world around us to gain knowledge, develop skills, and understand complex concepts. It is a process of inquiry that emphasizes hands-on, practical experiences, reflection, and critical thinking. Inquiry in a complex world refers to the exploration and investigation of complex issues and problems that require deep analysis and critical thinking. In such a world, traditional methods of learning such as memorization and rote learning may not be sufficient to fully understand and engage with the world around us. Experiential learning, on the other hand, provides a more effective way to navigate complexity and uncertainty by allowing learners to engage with real-world problems and develop a deeper understanding of their causes and potential solutions. Experiential learning and inquiry in a complex world are closely related because they both emphasize the importance of active engagement with the world around us. By exploring complex issues and problems through experiential learning, learners can develop critical thinking skills and gain a deeper understanding of the underlying causes and dynamics of these issues. This can lead to more effective problem-solving, better decision-making, and a greater ability to navigate complexity and uncertainty in the world.
The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 emphasizes the importance of experiential learning and inquiry-based approaches in education to develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical skills among learners. The policy recognizes that traditional methods of learning may not be sufficient to navigate the complexities and uncertainties of the modern world. The NEP 2020 envisions a shift towards a more holistic and interdisciplinary education system that encourages learners to engage with the world around them and develop a deeper understanding of complex issues and problems. It emphasizes the need to provide opportunities for hands-on, practical learning experiences that allow learners to apply their knowledge in real-world contexts. The policy also stresses the importance of inquiry-based learning that involves questioning, exploration, and investigation of complex issues and problems. It encourages educators to design learning experiences that promote curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among learners. In summary, the NEP 2020 recognizes the importance of experiential learning and inquiry-based approaches in education to prepare learners for the challenges of a complex and rapidly changing world. By emphasizing the development of practical skills, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities, the policy seeks to foster a generation of learners who can effectively navigate the uncertainties and complexities of the world around them.

Keywords: NEP, gain knowledge, develop skills, education

Introduction
In terms of student enrollment, India's higher education system is regarded as one of the largest in the world, trailing only China and the United States. With its extending framework and developing number of colleges and universities, India can possibly turn into noticeable schooling center point from here on out (Altbach, Reisberg, and Rumbley, 2019) [1]. However, colleges and universities' roles in the higher education system have become increasingly complex and difficult, necessitating an emphasis on understanding how people learn and ensuring the quality of education (Deshpande & Maurya, 2021) [7].
It is essential to cultivate a skilled and highly educated workforce in order to propel India's economy forward and facilitate the country's transition from a developing to a developed nation (Indian Ministry of Human Resource Development, 2020) [14]. The higher education system must shift its focus away from the traditional emphasis on content knowledge and toward developing competencies that enable students to direct their own learning, address significant academic issues, and construct knowledge (Kohli, 2019) [17].

In this setting, experiential learning emerges as a useful strategy. It allows students to play a central role in determining the course of their education by involving them actively and making an individual investment in their own learning experiences (Kolb, 2014) [20]. According to research (Van der Zwan, Reitsma, & Visser-Wijnveen, 2018) [33], compared to traditional didactic methods, experiential learning results in deeper learning outcomes for students in addition to being more enjoyable for them. According to Bowes, King, & White (2020) [3], employers are aware of the advantages of experiential learning and frequently prefer to hire graduates who have participated in such activities. However, despite its benefits, experiential learning is still poorly implemented in Indian higher education institutions (Majumdar, 2021) [23].

Over the most recent twenty years, endeavors to change the advanced education framework have focused on growing learners' inclinations and upgrading their reasonable comprehension of disciplinary substance (DeCorte, Greer, and Verschaffel, 1996; 1980, National Council of Mathematics Educators; Schmidt, McKnight, and Raizen, 1997) [6, 25, 30]. As a curricular and instructional model that addresses these goals, experiential learning has emerged. According to Kolb (2014) [20], experiential learning entails learning through hands-on experiences and reflecting on those experiences to gain knowledge and meaning. Experiential learning is an instructive methodology that underscores learning through reflection on doing and getting abilities, mindfulness, and figuring out past customary study halls (Kolb and Kolb, 2017) [18]. It incorporates exercises, for example, entry-level positions, concentrates on abroad projects, field studies, and administration picking up, permitting learners to apply disciplinary ideas, devices, and advances to tackle true issues (Krajcik and Blumenfeld, 2006) [21]. Although some progressive educational establishments have successfully integrated experiential learning into their instructional models, the general adoption of experiential learning in higher education has been relatively sluggish (Majumdar, 2021) [23]. Many colleges and universities have been hesitant to fully embrace experiential learning despite early work on inquiry-based approaches. It is critical to take note of that the effective execution of experiential learning requires cautious organizing and oversight of out-of-homeroom encounters. Concentrates on assistance learning have shown that inadequately organized programs that neglect to incorporate help with the scholastic educational plan offer restricted advantages to students learning, notwithstanding likely formative increases (Vogelgesang and Astin, 2000; Eyler and Giles, 1999) [34, 9]. Likewise, writing on entry-level positions, agreeable instruction, and school-to-work programs underlines the meaning of coordinating experiential learning with the curricular structure (Herrington, Reeves, and Oliver, 2010) [13]. Despite the fact that experiential learning has tremendous potential to enhance student learning experiences in higher education, its full integration into the Indian system of higher education has not yet been achieved. To effectively implement experiential learning and ensure that it becomes an integral part of the educational landscape, institutions must overcome obstacles and seize opportunities (Pathan & Niranjan, 2021) [28]. Universities and colleges can help students apply their knowledge and skills in real-world situations by embracing experiential learning, preparing them to thrive in a rapidly changing global society (Kolb & Kolb, 2017) [18].

As indicated by research (Moore, 1981; Parilla and Hesser (1998) [24, 27], there is frequently a discrepancy between the actual experiences that students have during internships and the stated objectives of programs. Numerous entry level positions are organized like free examinations, needing adequate workforce oversight or chances for organized reflection. To resolve this issue, the idea of coordinating conventional homeroom guidance with direct growth opportunities in unambiguous conditions has been proposed. The way of thinking of "learning-by-doing" empowers quick advancing as well as permits learners to apply the hypotheses and ideas they learn in the homeroom to genuine down to earth circumstances. In higher education, integrated experiential learning has been recognized as a useful addition to formal education because it adds an interactive component to traditional learning methods (Kolb, 2014) [20]. Although the idea of experiential learning may appear novel, the Indian educational system is deeply rooted in it. The old Gurukul framework, for example, consolidated fundamental parts of experiential advancing by drawing in learners in different exercises inside an open climate under the direction of a master. Experiential learning takes on a hybrid form in the digital age, incorporating rich content like field trips, experiments, videos, robotics, and actual experiences. According to Kolb & Kolb (2017) [18], this strategy encourages engagement from a physical, emotional, and cognitive perspective.

Experiential learning, in contrast to conventional curriculum-based instruction, can take place in a variety of timeframes, from brief, impulsive instances to extended periods lasting days, weeks, or even months, depending on the subject matter and context (Kolb, 2015) [35].

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the difficulties associated with its implementation in the Indian higher education system as well as the significance and benefits of experiential learning. It also seeks to identify opportunities for integrating experiential learning approaches into the Indian context, drawing on a review of the existing literature in the field (Kolb, 2015; Pathan and Niranjan, 2021) [35, 28]. Indian higher education institutions can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application by embracing experiential learning, providing students with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in the workplace (Bachmann & Rasmussen, 2019) [2]. According to Kolb & Kolb (2017) [18], this shift toward a student-centered and action-oriented approach has the potential to improve the overall effectiveness and quality of higher education in India. It will also pave the way for a workforce that will be competent and capable of driving the country's development.

Experiential Learning Opportunities in Higher Education

George Mason University (2011) [12], Loretto (2011) [22], and the Northern Illinois University OTC (2011) [26] all conducted studies that found that higher education offers numerous opportunities for experiential learning across a variety of subject areas. One such open door is the opportunity for learners to participate in work shadowing or temporary jobs, where they work close by experienced experts who go about as tutors. According to Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (2000) [4], knowledge must be acquired

in context, integrated with experience, and linked to multiple examples in order to be useful. Knowledge remains isolated and is less likely to be remembered or effectively applied to new circumstances without these connections. According to cognitive scientists (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000) [4], students frequently have difficulty putting what they have learned into practice because they are unable to access and use the information when it is needed and does not recognize the relevance of their knowledge in various contexts. Life doesn't come coordinated into slick sections with obvious tests flagging when and how to apply data. Students may have difficulty applying their knowledge to real-world situations unless they are explicitly taught to recognize the applicability of their knowledge, retrieve it from memory, and apply it effectively.

By giving students opportunities to put what they've learned to use in real-world work settings, experiential learning practices can help higher education institutions address this issue. Students can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application through hands-on experiences and real-world projects, enhancing their comprehension and preparing them for future endeavours.

In higher education, experiential learning opportunities are numerous and available in a variety of fields. Students can use the hands-on experiences provided by these opportunities to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Here are a few normal instances of experiential learning potential open doors in advanced education:

Internships: Students gain valuable industry experience and the opportunity to apply academic concepts in real-world settings through supervised work experiences related to their field of study.

Programs for Cooperative Education (Co-op): Co-op programs, like internships, combine paid work experience in relevant industries with periods of academic study. Students alternate between classroom instruction and real-world workplace application.

Service-Learning: Learners partake in local area administration exercises that are coordinated into their scholastic coursework. This method fosters civic engagement and social responsibility by combining hands-on experiences with reflective learning.

Field Studies and Exploration: Field trips, research projects, and fieldwork give students firsthand experience with specific topics or phenomena. This vivid learning approach permits learners to assemble information, lead explores, and break down discoveries in true settings.

Recreations and Contextual analyses: To improve their problem-solving, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities, students participate in simulated scenarios or analyze actual cases. Students are given the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in a controlled setting as a result of these activities, which mimic real-world scenarios.

Programs for Entrepreneurship: Learners have the chance to create and send off their own endeavors, encouraging pioneering abilities, advancement, and business discernment. Mentorship, networking opportunities, and resources for student-led startups are frequently provided by these programs.

Concentrate Abroad and Trade Projects: Through international study experiences, students become immersed in a variety of educational settings and cultures. While taking courses that are relevant to their major, they acquire global perspectives, cultural competence, and adaptability.

Research and Inventive Tasks: Learners work together with employees on research projects, inventive undertakings, or academic exercises inside their disciplines. Students can develop specialized skills and contribute to the creation of new knowledge through this experiential learning approach.

Programs for developing leaders: Learners partake in administration studios, courses, or projects that improve their authority capacities, collaboration abilities, and self-awareness. These encounters get ready learners for future positions of authority in their vocations and networks.

Benefits of Experiential Learning to Students

Experiential learning gives a few benefits to learners in advanced education, as upheld by different sources (Smith, 2019; Kolb, 2014; Sachs, 2017) [31, 20, 29]. Coming up next are the vital advantages of integrating experiential learning into the educational program:

Accelerated Learning: Dissimilar to conventional repetition learning, experiential learning advances dynamic commitment, decisive reasoning, critical thinking, and navigation, bringing about accelerated learning (Kolb, 2014) [20]. This approach empowers learners to apply hypothetical ideas in certifiable situations, improving their comprehension and maintenance of information.

Bridging the Theory-Practice Gap: By moving past hypothetical ideas and participating in reasonable encounters, learners overcome any issues between hypothesis and practice (Smith, 2019) [31]. Through the involved application, they gain a sensible comprehension of their picked calling and foster a more profound understanding of its pragmatic viewpoints.

Personalized Learning: Experiential learning permits learners to customize their learning process (Sachs, 2017) [29]. They can establish their own rhythm, investigate areas of premium, and effectively take part in their instructive encounters. Innovation improved experiential learning techniques, like re-enactments and flipped homerooms, giving adaptability and availability to learning materials.

Development of Reflective Practice Habits: Experiential learning develops intelligent pursuit routines, prompting the advancement of mastery (Kolb, 2014) [20]. By basically assessing their encounters and results, learners gain self-checking abilities, expect likely difficulties, and adjust their methodologies likewise.

Immediate Application of Knowledge: One of the huge benefits of experiential learning is the quick use of gained information (Sachs, 2017) [29]. Learners have the amazing

chance to take care of true issues, test their comprehension, and refine their abilities through the viable application. This involved experience upgrades their capacity to move information to various settings.

Profession Direction and Career Guidance: Experiential learning projects frequently line up with vocation objectives, helping learners investigate and foster their abilities, aptitudes, and interests (Smith, 2019) [31]. Through these exercises, learners gain experiences in different vocations ways, go with informed choices, and create a clearer course for their future undertakings.

Preparation for Real Life: Cooperative experiential learning exercises, frequently led in gatherings, advance collaboration, authority abilities, decisive reasoning, and versatility (Kolb, 2014) [20]. Learners figure out how to actually team up, influence assorted qualities, make activity designs, and explore genuine difficulties, setting them up for progress in the scholarly world.
Consolidating experiential learning in advanced education sustains an students-focused and application-situated approach, encouraging a more profound comprehension of ideas, common sense abilities, and self-improvement.

Benefits of Experiential Learning to Institutions
Experiential learning offers a scope of advantages to establishments in advanced education, which can decidedly affect different parts of the organization's work. These advantages include:

Enhanced understanding of course concepts: Experiential learning permits learners to acquire a more profound comprehension of key course ideas by applying them in certifiable settings (Kezar and Rhoads, 2001) [16].

Integration of current issues: Consolidating experiential training in courses empowers the coordination of recent concerns, making the growth opportunity more pertinent and connecting with learners (Kezar and Rhoads, 2001) [16].

Active student engagement: Experiential learning draws in learners as dynamic members in the growing experience, encouraging more significant levels of support and significant commitments to class conversations (Kezar and Rhoads, 2001) [16].

Community collaborations: Certain types of experiential learning set out open doors for organizations to lay out coordinated efforts and associations with neighbourhood networks, prompting a potential examination of coordinated efforts and producing thoughts for future tasks that address cultural difficulties (Finley and McNair, 2013) [11].

Integration of teaching, instructing, exploration, and administration: Experiential learning gives a stage to interfacing educating, examination, and local area administration, elevating an all-encompassing way to deal with schooling and building up the establishment's community job (Finley and McNair, 2013) [11].

Enhanced institutional reputation: Experiential learning extends learners' commitment to course material, bringing about a seriously satisfying instructive experience and possibly further developing students consistency standards (Eyler, 2009) [8].

Alumni relationships: Establishments that effectively participate in experiential learning and local area organizations are probably going to improve their standing, as they are viewed as foundations focused on significant educating and research joint efforts (Eyler, 2009) [8].

Graduated class connections: Experiential learning gives chances to lay out and keep up with associations with the graduated class through organizations with their working environments and endeavours, encouraging areas of strength for of help and cooperation (Eyler, 2009) [8].
By embracing experiential learning, establishments can profit from a more unique and drawn-in learning climate, more grounded local area associations, and an improved institutional remaining inside the advanced education scene.

Benefits of Experiential Learning to Community
Experiential learning carries a few advantages to the local area at large, fostering positive social effects and community improvement. The advantages of experiential learning for the local area include:

Addressing community needs: Experiential learning urges learners to draw in with the local area and its requirements effectively. Through help learning activities and local community drives, learners can add to tending to social, natural, and financial difficulties in the local area (Jacoby, 2015) [15].

Collaboration and partnerships: Experiential learning sets out open doors for a coordinated effort between instructive establishments and local area associations. These associations empower the pooling of assets, skills and points of view to handle local area issues cooperatively (Stoecker, 2016) [32].

Practical problem-solving: critical thinking: Experiential acquiring furnishes learners with common sense abilities and information to distinguish and tackle true issues. As they participate in active encounters, learners can apply their figuring out how to foster creative arrangements that straightforwardly benefit the local area (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Dim, 2001) [10].

Civic engagement and active citizenship: Experiential learning equips the students with Civic engagement through active participation, by empowering learners to become dynamic members in their networks. Through volunteerism, local area administration, and dynamic contribution to nearby drives, learners foster a feeling of social obligation and become dynamic residents (Eyler *et al*., 2001) [10].

Mutual learning and cultural understanding: Experiential learning gives potential open doors to learners to collaborate with different local area individuals. Through these cooperations, learners gain a more profound comprehension of various societies, points of view, and social real factors, cultivating shared learning and intercultural skill (Jacoby, 2015) [15].

Long-term community impact: Experiential learning ventures and drives can possibly have enduring effects on the local area. By tending to local area needs and creating economic arrangements, learners add to positive social change and Long-term community impact (Stoecker, 2016) [32].

Knowledge transfer and dissemination: Experiential learning permits learners to impart their scholastic information and abilities to the local area. By scattering their learnings and exploration discoveries, learners add to the more extensive information base and enable the local area with significant experiences (Jacoby, 2015) [15].

Strengthening community-university relations: Experiential learning drives cultivate more grounded associations between instructive establishments and the local area. This coordinated effort advances trust, participation, and a feeling of shared liability, helping both the local area and the foundation (Stoecker, 2016) [32].

By participating in experiential learning, instructive establishments and learners assume a functioning part in local area improvement, advancing civil rights, and cultivating significant associations that lead to positive change locally.

Educational Implications of Experiential Learning

Experiential learning offers important educational Implications that can upgrade the learning arrangement in advanced education. Kolb's (1984) [19] learning stages and cycle give a system to educators to fundamentally assess existing learning open doors and foster more reasonable methodologies for learners. Teachers ought to endeavour to plan exercises that take special care of the assorted learning inclinations of people, permitting them to participate in manners that best suit their necessities (Kolb, 1984) [19].

Recognizing and reinforcing lesser favoured learning styles can additionally upgrade the adequacy of experiential learning. By applying the experiential learning cycle, instructors can direct learners through the phases of substantial experience, intelligent perception, dynamic conceptualization, and dynamic trial and error (Kolb, 1984) [19]. It is ideal to foster exercises and materials that consolidate each phase of the cycle, giving a far-reaching growth opportunity. With regard to business and bookkeeping programs in advanced education, experiential learning has acquired expanding significance. Clark and White (2010) [5] stress the need of remembering the experiential learning part for quality college business schooling programs. Bosses likewise perceive the worth of experiential learning in fostering learners' impressive skills, expertise exceptionally pursued in the labour force (Clark and White, 2010) [5]. Experiential learning lines up with various learning styles and effects business schooling in the study hall. In proficient schooling applications, for example, the executives preparing and hierarchical turn of events, experiential learning methods are used to prepare representatives across different levels in the business climate. Models incorporate intelligent pretend based client support preparing and table games re-enacting business situations (Clark and White, 2010) [5]. Experiential learning can be really joined with scholarly realizing, which includes getting information through study without direct insight. While experiential learning underlines examination, drive, and drenching, scholarly learning centres around productive and conceptive learning (Clark and White, 2010) [5]. Generally, experiential learning supplements scholastic advancement by effectively including students in substantial encounters and giving a balanced instructive methodology.

Conclusion

Experiential learning, as an educational methodology, can be worked with through the usage of games, assistive instruments, and the formation of vivid learning situations. By effectively including learners in active exercises, they can by and by communicate with and fathom the genuine development and activity of ideas, in this manner working with powerful information move and maintenance. The experiential growing experience assumes a fundamental part in outfitting learners with the vital abilities and groundwork for their picked professions, building up course happy and hypothetical information. Through students focused encounters that underline doing, finding, reflecting, and applying, students improve their relational abilities, support fearlessness, and foster capable critical thinking skills. By effectively answering and settling true issues and cycles, learners gain down-to-earth bits of knowledge and significant encounters. Experiential learning can likewise be a useful asset for youthful students, utilizing their background and mental capacities to energize reflection, thought age, and positive activity. Also, it offers grown-ups the open door to contextualize their recently gained abilities inside genuine situations and cultivate inventive methodologies for execution. This is especially critical while showing reasonable abilities inside a study hall setting.

Nonetheless, it is essential to recognize that experiential learning has its impediments. Its adequacy is dependent upon the substance being instructed lining up with genuine applications and settings.

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