

Project Number: 2017-1-LT01-KA201-035235

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Introduction

Experiential learning is distinct from rote or didactic learning, in which the learner plays a comparatively passive role. Experiential education is a philosophy that informs many methodologies, in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, clarify values, and develop people's capacity to contribute to their communities.

2.1. Experiential Learning Module

Experiential learning is a method of educating through first-hand experience. Throughout the experiential learning process, the student is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning. Skills, knowledge and experience are also acquired outside of the traditional academic classroom setting and may include internships, studies abroad, field trips, field research and service-learning projects.

Experiential learning engages students in critical thinking, problem solving and decision making in contexts that are personally relevant to them. This approach to learning also involves creating opportunities for debriefing and consolidation of ideas and skills through feedback, reflection, and the application of the ideas and skills to new situations.

The concept of experiential learning was first explored by John Dewey and Jean Piaget, amongst others. It was made popular by education theorist David A. Kolb, who, along with Ron Fry, developed the experiential learning theory, which is based on the idea that learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experience. It is based on four main elements which operate in a continuous cycle during the learning experience:

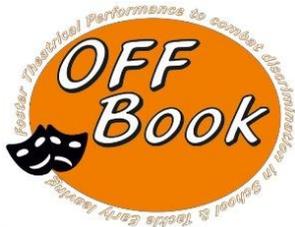
- Concrete experience
- Reflective observation
- Abstract conceptualization
- Active experimentation

Experiential learning offers information and tools which help students understand cognitive concepts and



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processes, enabling interaction amongst practitioner, teacher and the group.

The model suggested by D. Kolb consists of a sequence made up of 4 stages which cyclically repeat. Starting from a concrete experience (either a group one or an individual one)

which may be connected to emotions, feelings, observations, the students builds up an image of that experience.

- The first stage – the student decodes the image of the experience by reflexive observation, having in mind questions like: „What happened?“, „Which are the results?“
- The second stage – the experience becomes abstract. At this stage the student already has theories, but there appear solutions to the problems due to lateral thinking about the matter. The student usually draws upon questions like: „What do these results mean?“, „What influences the result?“, „How have I influenced the results?“. At this stage the matter is more profoundly understood.
- The third stage – after building up ideas and solutions connected to the concrete experience, this step consists of placing the learning in a practical stage which will generate improved future actions.
- The fourth stage – it involves following out the ideas and the solutions found in the previous stages, this leading to a new experience which will carry on with the cycles of the experiential learning.

In conclusion, the experiential learning is represented in the form of a cycle, with four stages – *Experience/Exploration, Observation/Reflection, Abstract conceptualization, Active experimentation*. The learning processes are more efficient when starting from experiences, resulting directly from one's own actions, as contrasted with learning from watching others perform, reading others' instructions or descriptions, or listening to others' instructions or lectures.

Online Resources

Experiential learning cycle

<http://www.wageningenportals.nl/misp/tool/experiential-learning-cycle>

Information about the experiential learning cycle and its use in activities.

What is experiential learning?

<https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-experiential-learning-definition-theories-examples.html>

The definition of the experiential learning, theories and examples.

2.2. Implementation

2.2.1. In Schools

Experiential learning is the base for the XXI c. education system; for this reason, this learning model can be and is widely applied in all age groups. Since it is based on the experience and “the touch of a real world” — theory is blended with the practice —, children are encouraged to develop their personal strengths and talents which may serve in everyday life.

The most common activities of experiential learning are:

- The outdoor classrooms (doing some experiments hands on, measuring the distance in math classes, for example);
- Discussions (with famous people on various topics, related with moral or social issues);
- Role-play and simulations (of real-life situations);
- Presentations and projects based on activities (analysis of experiments, movies, and shows or plays in the theatre);



It is also proved that technology can make a great impact on experiential learning. Searching for information or creating projects and presentations, children developed their skills using computer and other modern technology. The majority of educators (93%) claim that modern technologies applied in the classroom and their curriculum in general help children to reach great achievements in their academic life.

References: Kolb, David A. *Experiential learning: experience as the source of learning and development*. Pearson Education, 2015.

Online Resources

Heritage Xperiential Learning School

<http://heritagexperiential.org/about-us/school-profile/>

The webpage of the school which curriculum is entirely based on Experiential Learning

York Catholic District School Board

<http://www.ycdsb.ca/pathways/experiential-learning/>

Experiential Learning in religious background

Experiential learning in the classroom – learn by doing

<https://www.realityworks.com/documents/resources/experientiallearninginfographic-8-2014-final.pdf>

Some more activities based on experiential method

Experiential learning in the classroom – learn by doing

<https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/experience/sites/files/experience/public/shared/Team%20Based%20Problem%20Solving%20Activities%20-%20UTM%20EEO.pdf>

Some more activities based on experiential method

2.2.2. In Business Education

Experiential learning brings the learner in direct contact with the learning experience. Thus, knowledge is not transmitted from one person (the teacher) to another (the learner), but it is formed as a result of the direct experiences the learner is exposed to. The teacher plays an important role in creating and orchestrating the adequate opportunities for experiential learning to take place.

Integrating experiential learning through Business Education can be done both in secondary schools within the remits of the Business studies curriculum and in any other levels of education, be they vocational or higher education. Regardless of the avenue used, integrating experiential learning through Business Education can only bring benefits to students on which we develop below.

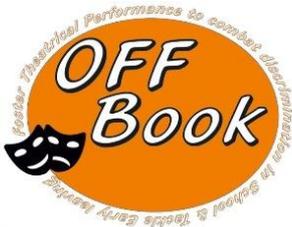
Like most curricular subjects, Business Education has a lot of theories that learners have to know, internalise and be able to use. What we notice is that Business Education graduates have learned the theories and have a good level of mastering the concepts needed to enter the workforce, yet more work is needed for them to know what to do with the knowledge gained (Chia & Holt, 2008). In different organisations and business institutions, those who own soft skills and who have the ability to work with, manipulate and apply the knowledge are the ones who differentiate themselves successfully from the ones who experience difficulties.



Orchestrating experiential learning opportunities in Business Education is not an easy task. Confined to the perimeters of the classroom, the closest one can get to a real-life business situation is to learn from different case-studies, yet they cannot replace the learning that can take places from direct, personal encounters with a workplace situation. Through experiential learning, we offer opportunities for learners to make real decisions, to explore the theory and see for themselves how it applies in practice. Thus, we allow them the opportunity to become flexible in their thinking, to undertake different workplace positions and learn from each of them, to reflect on their own learning and on strategies they could employ in real situations to overcome problems, to solve conflicts and manage situations.

In Business Education, some of the most common experiential learning opportunities are:

- Job shadowing
- Work experience
- Create Business Fairs/Stalls
- Student managed investment funds
- Placements
- Internships
- Field-based projects



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The benefits of such experiences are numerous:

- It gives the applicant a more competitive edge when applying for jobs, as the employer is likely to be more interested in those who already have first-hand experience in the workplace
- It provides an opportunity to apply the knowledge learnt in the classroom to real life situations, thus developing skills and competencies such as communication, IT, team-work, conflict resolution, reflection and strategy planning
- It may help build up contact which may be needed in the future when it comes to employment
- It is a great way of trying out different sides to a career before committing to one hence it helps narrow down your options and decide what one likes or does not like as a career

References: Chia, R & Holt, R 2008, 'The nature of knowledge in business schools' *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, vol 7, no. 4, pp. 471-486.

Online Resources

General business teaching resources

<http://fod.msu.edu/oir/general-business-teaching-resources>

This website is a portal to many other sites which offer up-to-date, detailed and insightful information on all aspects of Business Education: e.g.: general resources, syllabi and course materials, journals on Business Education with free access to downloadable, published articles and case-studies from this field.

Transformational learning in business education

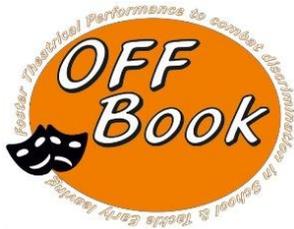
https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=busadmin_faculty

This article, entitled 'Transformational Learning in Business Education: The Pivotal Role of Experiential Learning Projects' by Rita D. Kosnik, Jacob K. Tingle and Edwin L. Blaton III is a very good starting point when reading about this topic. The article discusses in great detail the limitations of internships and the pressure they put on the educational establishments and offers an alternative to these in the form of Experiential Learning Projects (ELP). It discusses the learning theories behind experiential learning, the versatility of Experiential Learning Projects and offers guidance on their implementation and assessment.



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2.3. Comparisons and Benefits

When we talk about experiential learning, “involving” is the key word. The student learns by doing, by cooperating but, most of all, he learns through his own experience.

In classical learning, the student is a passive receiver of the information. In experiential learning, he becomes an active part of the process, accumulating knowledge and directly contributing to own personal development.

In classical learning, most often, the teacher transmits the information to all group, but he doesn't have an immediate feed-back, while in experiential learning, each person is important. Experiential learning creates a dialogue between teacher and student - questions are meant to improve the educational act.

Classical learning is based on theory, while the experiential one is based on perception. Experiential learning involves emotions and feelings, these two components being a decisive factor in obtaining an optimum in learning process.

In classical learning, the teacher is a simple information transmitter. In experiential learning, the skilful teacher transforms the educational act in an interactive and challenging one.

For example, at Science, Spring Flowers theme:

- In classical learning, the teacher will tell the students about flowers that grow in spring. He will talk to students about the meteorological phenomena, life environments and life conditions.
- Experiential learning will determine the teacher to organize a forest trip, in a spring day, for picking up spring flowers. Direct observation, students actively involving, fresh air activity will offer these ones a better comprehension lesson, better than the theory exposed in the classroom.

Traditionally, the evaluation is done in relation to the other students, the items being established by theoretical criteria, meant to rank the group of students. In experiential learning the students are evaluated in relation to themselves. It's important to see their progress achieved as a result of the experiential activities.

Moreover, experiential learning emphasizes soft skills and hard skills at the same time: active listening, negotiation skills, public speaking, critical thinking, etc.

There is no doubt that traditional learning has its own advantages, as the elements of acquiring and consolidating knowledge are extremely important, but it is also essential that theory should be put into practice, to ensure that *know* and *do* turn into *know how to do*.

Online Resources

Comparing Behaviourist and Experiential Learning Theories

<https://kindleflames.wordpress.com/2017/03/20/01-learning-theories/>

Perspective, definition and the learning process. The role of the teacher in the experiential approach.

The Benefits of Experiential Learning

<https://www.envisionexperience.com/blog/the-benefits-of-experiential-learning>

The benefits of using the experiential learning process in the classroom.

2.4. Final Remarks

Teachers know that students learn more quickly and remember more information when the subject matter relates to them personally. The act of *doing* makes learning extremely personal. As Sir Richard Branson says, “You don’t learn to walk by following rules. You learn by doing, and by falling over.” The process of experiential learning involves both self-initiative and self-assessment, as well as hands-on activity.

Experiences are structured to require the student to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for results. Throughout the experiential learning process, the student is actively engaged in asking questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic and spontaneous opportunities for learning are encouraged. The students explore and build their own values, so the results of the learning process are personal.



The teacher’s primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting students, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process. In this way, in the learning environment relationships are developed and nurtured: student to self, student to others and student to the world in general.

Experiential learning methodology is highly effective and it takes the learning beyond the classroom. This has introduced the concepts of flipped classroom, where the learning goes to the students and not the other way.

Online Resources

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