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Promoting Experience Learning in Secondary Students

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Abstract

Today's world is dynamic and ever-changing. It's become widely accepted that children born at the late end of the 20th century and subsequent generations can expect to have around five careers over the course of a lifetime. Online classes and specialised skill workshops are becoming easy ways for employees to stay up-to-date with the latest trends and skills necessary to thrive in today's modern workplace. Because of this, increasingly employers are valuing soft skills in potential employees. For most industries, soft skills such as adaptability and empathy are considered just as valuable in a new employee as the skills and qualifications they hold.

Now more than ever, it is crucial that schools integrate new learning techniques to help prepare children for the future workplace. Rote and didactic learning styles have dominated the education system since the industrial revolution. With both these methods, the child plays a relatively passive role in the learning process. In more recent times, it has become common practice for teachers to integrate more active learning techniques in the classroom such as experiential learning.

Experiential [learning] is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with students in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values. Experiential [learning] is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with students in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values.

Unlike traditional classroom situations where students may compete with one another or remain uninvolved or unmotivated and where the instruction is highly structured, students in experiential learning situations cooperate and learn from one another in a more semi-structured approach. Instruction is designed to engage students in direct experiences which are tied to real world problems and situations in which the instructor facilitates rather than directs student progress.

Introduction

Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis and synthesis. 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 posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative and constructing meaning. Students are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully and/or physically. This involvement produces a perception that the learning task is authentic. The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning. Relationships are developed and nurtured: student to self, student to others and student to the world at large. The instructor and student may experience success, failure, adventure, risk-taking and uncertainty, because the outcomes of the experience

cannot totally be predicted. Opportunities are nurtured for students and instructors to explore and examine their own values. The instructor's primary roles include setting suitable experiences, posing problems, setting boundaries, supporting students, insuring physical and emotional safety, and facilitating the learning process. The instructor recognizes and encourages spontaneous opportunities for learning. Instructors strive to be aware of their biases, judgments and pre-conceptions, and how these influence the student. The design of the learning experience includes the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes and successes.

Experiential Learning process: Experiential learning involves a number of steps that offer student a hands-on, collaborative and reflective learning experience which helps them to “fully learn new skills and knowledge”

Experiencing Doing: Students will perform or do a hands-on minds-on experience with little or no help from the instructor. Examples might include: Making products or models, role-playing, giving a presentation, problem-solving, playing a game. A key facet of experiential learning is what the student learns from the experience rather than the quantity or quality of the experience.

Sharing / Reflecting: Students will share the results, reactions and observations with their peers. Students will also get other peers to talk about their own experience, share their reactions and observations and discuss feelings generated by the experience. The sharing equates to reflecting on what they discovered and relating it to past experiences which can be used for future use.

Processing/ Analysing: Students will discuss, analyse and reflect upon the experience. Describing and analysing their experiences allow students to relate them to future learning experiences. Students will also discuss how the experience was carried out, how themes, problems and issues emerged as a result of the experience. Students will discuss how specific problems or issues were addressed and to identify recurring themes.

Generalizing: Students will connect the experience with real world examples, find trends or common truths in the experience, and identify “real life” principles that emerged.

Application: Students will apply what they learned in the experience (and what they learned from past experiences and practice) to a similar or different situation. Also, students will discuss how the newly learned process can be applied to other situations. Students will discuss how issues raised can be useful in future situations and how more effective behaviour can develop from what they learned. The instructor should help each student feel a sense of ownership for what was learned.

Experiential Learning Opportunities in Higher Education

There are numerous experiential learning opportunities in higher education that can be found in most disciplines.

Apprenticeship Experiences provide students an opportunity to try out a job usually with an experienced professional in the field to act as a mentor. Apprenticeships are a type of on the job training which may lead to certification. Many skilled laborers learn their trade by doing an apprenticeship.

Clinical Experiences are hands-on experiences of a pre-determined duration directly tied to an area of study such as nursing students participating in a hospital-based experience or child development and teacher education students participating in day care and classroom settings.

Cooperative Education Experiences are more extensive than internships and will usually span two or more semesters of work. Co-ops are paid professional work experiences and are tied very closely to the student's academic work. During the co-op experience students will receive ongoing advising and the co-op will be structured to meet the student's academic and/or career goals. Co-op experience usually is included on a student's transcript in addition to being awarded designated credit hours for its completion.

Fellowship Experiences provide tuition or aid to support the training of students for a period of time, usually between 6 months to one year. They are usually made by educational institutions, corporations, or foundations

to assist individuals pursuing a course of study or research. Post-graduate fellowships assist students at the graduate level while post-doctorate fellowships provide monies for those who have already achieved their doctorate degree.

Field Work Experiences allow students to explore and apply content learned in the classroom in a specified field experience away from the classroom. Field work experiences bridge educational experiences with an outside community which can range from neighborhoods and schools to anthropological dig sites and laboratory settings.

Internship Experiences are job-related and provide students and job changers with an opportunity to test the waters in a career field and also gain some valuable work experience. Internships can be for credit, not for credit, paid or unpaid.

Student Teaching Experiences provides student candidates with an opportunity to put into practice the knowledge and skills he or she has been developing in the preparation program. Student teaching typically involves an on-site experience in a partner school and opportunities for formal and informal candidate reflection on their teaching experience.

The on-site teaching portion of this experience can range from ten to sixteen weeks, depending on the program.

Study Abroad Experiences offer students a unique opportunity to learn in another culture, within the security of a host family and a host institution carefully chosen to allow the transfer of credit to a student's degree program. Students studying a foreign language will perfect the accent and greatly expand their vocabulary--a skill retained for life. Making new friends, and travel and decision making, are also key parts of the study abroad experience.

Experiential learning is the process of learning through experience, especially learning by doing something. This complete process involves both self-initiative and self-assessment as well as a hands-on activity. So having hands-on technology and innovation students and teachers alike can benefit from experiential learning opportunities in the classroom as well as in online learning.

Advantages of Experiential Learning:

- **Creates real-world experiences**
Nowadays students are advanced, they need more material and resources to study and understand the real world. Experiential learning takes data and concepts and uses them in hands-on tasks, yielding real results. If the students interact and learn using the information, it provides a real experience that helps them to grasp it more easily along with keeping it in mind for a long time.
- **Open more opportunities for creativity**
In this fast world, problems can occur at any time, but having a tech hand we have multiple solutions for each problem. Experiential learning enables students to engage the creative portions of their brains and uses their creative solutions to problems. This problem-solving and innovative way of learning results in a variety of positive outcomes enriching the student's success as a whole along with bringing overall success for them.
- **Accelerates learning**
Learning by implementing the same learning point gives a more lasting effect than theoretical learning. Further, experiential learning in higher education also allows students to develop multiple skills such as problem-solving and effective decision-making at the same time. Institutions can choose a Student Information System to provide students with more features that promote self-learning. It helps students to access desired programs and courses, access any study material, complete their projects and assignments on time, and a lot more.

- **Integration of theory and practice**

Integration and merger of theory and practice open new opportunities for students to learn and apply in the field to understand the real effects and behaviour. It also helps in remembering concepts and ideas for a longer period.

- **Helps in learning mistakes**

Experiential learning includes hands of errors, as students work on the given tasks, they may make mistakes and find various approaches to work better each time. While students discard methods that don't work, the act of trying something new and then abandoning it becomes a valuable part of the learning process. Students learn not to fear mistakes, but to benefit from, and remember them.

- **Guides students toward the future**

Experiential learning encourages students to be career-oriented as it involves learning with real-world activities and experiences. Through these activities, students can start to develop and discover these interests, skills, aptitudes, and passions. This method of learning is more often self-discovery than any other form of learning, it brings a more clear path to what they want to pursue after their course completion.

- **Promotion of communication skills**

Through experiential learning, you can bridge the gap in communication as it involves teamwork. Teamwork initiates learning and practicing together promoting communication skills.

- **Accomplishments are obvious**

Learners find ways to improve their knowledge, in as little as an hour because of the feedback loop created by problem-solving, feedback, and practicing again. Having online tools and technologies, students more often can learn by having new paths and success instead of a simple classroom learning session.



Disadvantages of Experiential Learning:

- **Requires patience and guidance**

Experiential learning requires patience and guidance, students need to try and experiment with various methods that require time and patience, and meanwhile, the results of this remain for a longer time.

- **A decentralized process**

Experiential learning is considered a decentralized process as students can access any data and information and can submit assignments and projects on the same online platform so faculties can not access it using the traditional modes.

Conclusion

Using online tools and technologies, experiential learning encourages students to enhance their knowledge and skills, it allows students to learn using impactful methods and tactics that are impossible to do with traditional classroom studies. Experiential learning experiences help to complete students' preparation for their chosen careers which reinforce course content and theory. Students learn through student- rather than instructor-centred experiences by doing, discovering, reflecting and applying. Through these experiences students develop communication skills and self-confidence and gain and strengthen decision-making skills by responding to and solving real world problems and processes.

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