

Evolving Experiential Learning Culture in Middle Schools in India: A Pedagogical Approach through the Lens of Kolb's Model

• Ashok Kumar¹

• Diya Mehra Soni²

“Experience is the only source of learning.” - Swami Vivekananda

Abstract

The rapid technological advancements and replacements lead to changeability. This results in newer meanings and representations of the epistemic and affective styles. Learning happens from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment. Therefore, education should simulate experiences of the real-world. This article intends to study experiential learning through the lens of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, and its implementation in schools. Kolb's Learning Cycle displays practicality and rationale to meet the overarching aim of equability and inclusiveness in contemporary education. He maintains the constructivist approach, where experience is the key to learning and new experiences are based on prior encounters. Learning to Kolb is a process and not an outcome. Kolb's differentiators are the learning modes or stages and learning styles which integrate the processing continuum and the perception continuum in the learning process. The article explores experiential learning using Kolb's Learning Cycle as a pedagogical approach at middle school level and proposes guidelines for teachers to plan and execute their lessons.

Keywords: *Experiential learning, Kolb's learning cycle model, pedagogy, middle school, NEP 2020, NCF, learner's autonomy, developmental stages.*

Experiencing Experiences

In general, we can say that learning is a lifelong process, which goes from womb to tomb. In psychological terms, learning is a relatively permanent change in behaviour (Kimble, 1961). Therefore, learning provides a key to the structure of personality and behaviour. Experience plays a dominating role in moulding and shaping the behaviour of the learners right from birth. This brings up an important question -

¹Assistant Professor, Department of Educational Psychology and Foundations of Education, NCERT, New Delhi. ✉ dr.ashokkumar2010@gmail.com

²Teacher, Department of Education, WA, Australia. ✉ diya.mehrasoni@gmail.com

what is experience? Dewey (1925) believes that experience is an “interaction of organism and environment”. The interaction leaves an impression on the mind. Experiences are “mental and corporeal phenomena” that can be directly or vicariously felt, recounted, reproduced, and transferred to new situations thereby generating new experiences (Jantzen, 2013). A child knows merely through experience that if they throw a ball towards the sky, it is bound to fall back on the ground. Looking at the mirror, children are fascinated by their image in it, and they construct a new understanding about reflection in shiny surfaces including water.

How does experience exhibit itself? Experiences are manifested in intrapersonal and interpersonal interactions embedded in an environment that forms the basis of an individual’s perceptions and thoughts which eventually modify behaviour (Paulsen, 2020, p. 863). Directly or indirectly, experiences bring a change in behaviour which is the end goal of all learning. Learning precedes all changes or modifications in behaviour, and new learning is constructed through prior experiences maintaining the “experiential continuum” (Dewey, 1938, p. 28). Therefore, experiences and learning are complementary in nature and together they play a vital role in shaping the behaviour of learners. The two-way exchange of experience and learning forms the basis of experiential learning.

Theoretical Framework of Experiential Learning

In modern times, experiential learning has found its theoretical and pedagogical stronghold through the works of Kurt Lewin, John Dewey, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, and David Kolb. Lewin’s Field Theory (1940) emphasizes behaviour formation when an individual participates in a series of life spaces (work, family, society) to make learning “effective and goal-directed”. The theory draws similarities from B. F. Skinner’s (1938) theory of operant conditioning which is particularly relevant when considering pedagogical activities (Roberts & Potrac, 2014). Lewin, in his three-stage change model (1940), highlighted that a dialectical process that includes concrete experiences and ongoing feedback to learners is inevitable to modify learners’ behaviour. Dewey’s Model of Experiential Learning (1938) asserts that learners “learn by doing” and “concrete experiences lead to higher-order purposeful action”. Dewey (1896), through his “Laboratory Schools”, ascertained that life is a laboratory where learners test hypotheses within a system of variables. Like Lewin, Dewey (1938) also describes learning as a dialectical process that “integrates experience and concepts, observations and actions”. Piaget’s Model of Learning and Cognitive Development (1936) substantiates the implementation of experiential learning as pedagogy. Piaget claims that cognitive structures are a result of “direct exposure

and interaction with the environment” (Jeanette C. et al., 2023, p. 86). Learning, according to Piaget, takes place through assimilation of experiences into existing schemas/concepts, accommodation of schemas/concepts to fit new schemas, and striking balance between existing and new information (Hanfstingl B. et al., 2021). Therefore, experiences beget experiences, learning constructs learning.

The constructivist philosophy is consolidated by Vygotsky (1978, p. 73) who believes learners construct knowledge through close interactions by intertwining external and internal factors in a socio-cultural environment. This implies the importance of individual and collaborative experiences in the learning process. David Kolb pioneered Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) in 1984 by integrating the works of the above philosophers. Kolb (1984) believes that experience is the learning source, and learning is the process to create knowledge through the transformation of experience. Experiences may have a “developmental quality” and could help people improve their capabilities by having their current presuppositions, expectations, and abilities challenged (Bessant J., 2001). Kolb’s theory and model are premised on providing learners with learning experiences that foster active participation and sensory interactions with the learning experiences (Akella, D., 2010). Saunders (1992) explains that meaning is created in the mind of the students because of their sensory interactions with their world and because it is created in the mind of the learners, it cannot simply be told by the teacher. Therefore, students should be able to choose and take charge of their learning. Therefore, Kolb (1984) places utmost emphasis on learner’s autonomy. Research supports the view that when learners are psychologically attached to the learning process, it is more meaningful and relevant. Furthermore, learner involvement in decision-making ensures that learning is effective. Kolb (2005) states that increased learner engagement has been seen when learners are aware of their abilities and interests. Therefore, identifying learning styles is helpful in setting learning goals, implementing learning strategies, reflecting on experiences, and taking responsibility of one’s learning in and out of class. Kolb’s recursive learning cycle provides a structure for identifying learning styles and establishing learning stages.

Considering the above, experiential learning is a pedagogical approach that can cater to a wide range of skills for a diverse population. There are two important reasons to substantiate the claim. One, through experiential learning, learners are provided with a variety of experiences to be actively engaged in the learning process. Experiences are so designed that they develop their critical thought, generate ideas, and foster effective communication of the ideas. Second, ideas are not immutable elements of thought as they undergo continuous transformation through prior and

new experiences (Kolb, 2014, p. 26). The above perspective also resonates with cognitive conflict theory of learning (Piaget, 1963).

Exposure to varied and rich experiences leads to behaviour modification through the resolution of “conflicts among dialectically opposed modes of adaptation” to the world (Kolb, 2011). Therefore, the prerequisite for learning to happen is only possible when the learner has an active experiential engagement and immersion where experiences are at the “center of the learning process” (Kolb, 2005). Kolb defines experiential learning as a “continuous process grounded in experience” (Kolb, 1984) and takes place beyond the traditional classroom to enhance the personal and intellectual growth of the learners. Therefore, experiential learning as a pedagogy has the potential to provide opportunities that are missing in a textbook-centric and teacher-driven educational environment which focuses on outcomes and not the process. Teachers command an elevated role of a facilitator in the interplay and functioning of the three domains for holistic development of learners. Experiential learning is a strong pedagogical ground-plan where teachers draw from the three domains to design, plan, and implement a successful pedagogy addressing the three domains through the learning process to generate new experiences.

The Concept of Experiential Learning in Indian Context

Experiential learning (Prayogic Gyan) finds its origin in the Gurukul system. The Gurukul system believes learning to be an experience. The Gurukul pedagogy fostered holistic development through curiosity, participation, and hands-on learning with an underpinning philosophy of learners’ uniqueness to personalize learning (Joshi, 2021, p. 7), and through storytelling, learners (shishyas) constructed knowledge of ethics, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, medicine, political science, physical fitness, and warfare.

The experiential engagement of Arjuna with Dronacharya, Rama with Vishwamitra, and Chandragupta Maurya with Chanakya are inspiring examples in the history of ancient Indian pedagogy. Moreover, the Indian education system in the ancient past had been rooted in experiential learning. The Gurukul system believes “learning to be an experience.” With an underpinning philosophy to personalize learning through hands-on practice and storytelling, the learners (shishyas) constructed knowledge of ethics and logic, mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, medicine, political science, physical fitness, and statecraft (Rajguru, 2024, pp. 1–9). The Gurukul pedagogy embedded the tenets of Panch Kosha to foster holistic development through curiosity, participation, and hands-on learning.

There has been a dominant shift from ancient India's traditional learning model to rote memorization that "fails to do justice to a child's potential" (Nagarathinam & Vani, 2018).

The emergence of the strong intent for preserving the roots and reviving the Pancha Kosha theory within educational settings is evident in contemporary national educational policies. The integration aims to foster a transformative approach that aligns with the holistic development of learners where the value of nurturing not just the intellectual, but also the emotional, physical, energetic, and spiritual layers of learners (Chapagain, 2025, p. 31). Furthermore, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF, 2023, p. 109) proposed suggestions on the fact that children learn in a variety of ways—through a variety of experiences which can be done by experimenting, reading, questioning, listening, ideating, discussing, and reflecting. They express themselves in speech, movement, or writing—both individually and with others including family members and peers. The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020, p. 5) emphasizes the comprehensive development of learners across physical, emotional, social, mental, intellectual, and ethical dimensions.

The Happiness Curriculum states that education should build resilience to face real-life challenges, empower learners to solve problems through critical thought and reasoning, and enable them to comprehend happiness within self, relationships, and society (Rani & Kumar, SCERT, 2023). Moreover, in the words of Mahatma Gandhi (1937), to achieve holistic learning (3H) and development, learners need an experience that facilitates "an all-round drawing out of the best in child and man—body, mind, and spirit." This heightens the need for education to provide holistic development of the three interdependent domains of learning—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor skills. The cognitive domain encompasses all mental and intellectual processes for gaining knowledge. The affective domain is characterized by learners' emotions and attitude as reflected by their values, beliefs, and personal interests. The psychomotor domain constitutes learning behavior achieved through kinesthetic or neuromuscular motor activities (National Library of Medicine, 1996, p. 1).

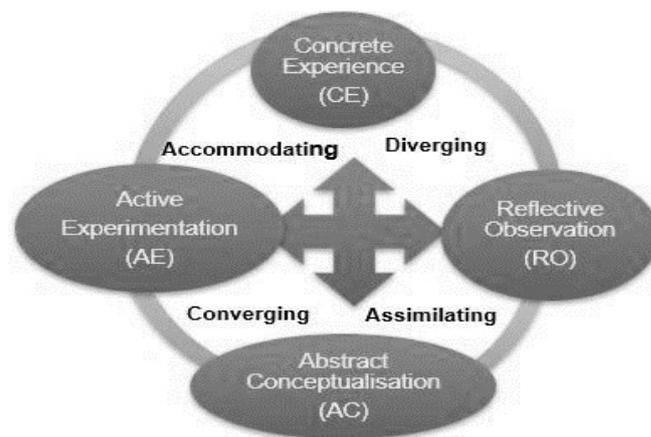
Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory: The Cycle of Learning

Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) was established through his experiential learning model. ELT is based on Kolb's belief that ideas are transformed through experience and that ideas are not fixed and immutable elements of thought. They are formed and reformed through learners' preferred learning styles which are influenced by multiple factors such as social environment, educational

experiences, and a wide spectrum of learners' cognitive processes. The learning cycle model is a recurring four-mode/stage cycle with four separate learning styles. Through the model, learners engage in a concrete experience and reflective observation which assimilates into theory and conclusions (abstract conceptualization), and finally the new hypotheses are tested in different situations (active experimentation).

The result after active experimentation could be a concrete experience for the next cycle and the cycle recurs. Kolb considers any one learning mode to be insufficient in processing information, and all four modes of the cycle must be negotiated by the learner. Effective learning occurs when a learner completes each stage of the cycle. However, a learner could enter at any point of the cycle.

Kolb's Cycle of Learning



Kolb's cycle of learning reflects his philosophy of presenting and resolving "conflicts" to establish learning. Learner's preferred style is a product of "two conflicting choices" given at the two ends of each axis. Kolb named the axes as the processing continuum and perception continuum. He believes that learners perceive information from concrete experience and abstract conceptualization; and process information from reflective observation and active experimentation. The following table describes the four modes or stages of learning:

Concrete Experience (CE)	Learners learn from their surroundings, personal interactions and real-life experiences. They actively participate in the experience through the five senses - sight, hear, touch, smell and taste.
Reflective Observation (RO)	Learners employ cognition to reflect about the situation or experience before forming an opinion. They engage in the process through observing and perceiving. They evaluate with objectivity and patience.
Abstract Conceptualization (AC)	Learners create theories and principles based on concrete information and logical reasoning. They explain their experiences without subjectivity and biases. They use inductive-deductive reasoning to draw conclusions and generalize theories and principles.
Active Experimentation (AE)	Learners use the conclusions drawn in the AC stages hypotheses to test validity and reliability. Learners constantly change or renew their original thinking and methods. Learners conceptualize new experiences and integrate them with past experiences.

Kolb's Learning Styles

Kolb proposed four learning styles developed from his concept of perception and processing continuum.

1. Converging style of learning: Learners approach knowledge through AC stage and process it through AE. They think deductively and are more interested in technical tasks and problem solving. They are also good at decision making and putting ideas into practice. They are less concerned about people and interpersonal aspects.

2. Diverging style of learning: Learners prefer to learn through CE and process through RO. They view situations from multiple points of view. They are characterized by the ability to imagine, brainstorm to generate new ideas. Their broad cultural orientations make them interested in people, communication, feelings and values. They are active listeners and have an open mind to receive feedback.

3. Accommodating style of learning: Learners enter the learning cycle at CE stage. They rely on other people for information and analysis. They then process the information and test their ideas through active experimentation. They can be best described as 'hands-on' individuals who have a practical and experimental

approach. These individuals are more intuitive than logical. Thus, they are willing to take risks and develop extreme resilience.

4. Assimilating style of learning: Learners prefer to enter at AC stage and process it through RO. They require theoretical explanations and gain a wide range of information which they arrange in logical order. They are more focused on ideas and abstract concepts than on people. Therefore, their strengths lie in inductive reasoning and ability to create analytical models.

Literature Review

Multiple pedagogical philosophies have been established and implemented to achieve learning outcomes through holistic development of learners. However, Experiential Learning (EL) has been linked with progressive education (Ranken E. et al, 2024). Recent empirical research suggested that EL may be a valuable pedagogical approach to support the acquisition of knowledge and children's academic achievement (Ranken E. et al, 2024). In addition, EL methods could be an appropriate method to be applied to bridge conceptual knowledge with skills adapted to real conditions (Efstrati D., 2019). Learning comes from experience and one of the four basic elements of learning is experience (Pamungkas S.F. et al, 2019). Moreover, Kishor (2020) conducted a study on a title "Promoting learners' autonomy" through experiential learning among secondary school students. The objective was to study the effectiveness of developed instructional modules with traditional methods of teaching. The results were quantified using the achievements scores of experimental groups that comprised of students in grade eighth. The study concluded that experiential learning in *Sciences* enhances learner autonomy, and it is best achieved when teacher acts as a facilitator of learning. The results have a potential to provide a framework for educators to implement best practices that will raise the achievement level of students in science.

In a study to highlight the difference in students' cognitive and affective development in Indian classrooms through experiential learning, Sachdeva (2017) has emphasized the role of experiential learning where dialogue, students' active involvement, and action are encouraged. Furthermore, Mehra and Kaur (2010) conducted a study on the effectiveness of an experiential learning strategy on the enhancement of environmental awareness among primary school students. The experimental group was exposed to an experiential learning strategy, and students of the control group were taught the same topic by a traditional learning method. The findings of the study revealed that the students taught EVS by an experiential learning strategy exhibited better environmental awareness than those taught by

traditional learning methods. The prior research helped researchers adhere to the principles of experiential learning and decide to promote learner autonomy using experiential learning among secondary school students.

Jarrell (2019) conducted a qualitative study employing Kolb's principles of ELT to assess its efficacy for exchange students in Australia. Jarrell strictly adhered to Kolb's four learning styles and modes in successfully developing students' leadership abilities, socio-cultural assimilation, and emotional awareness along with gaining technical knowledge.

Additionally, Kumar and Lakra (2023) conducted a study analyzing teachers' perceptions toward the use of experiential learning. They concluded that more female teachers than male teachers felt that experiential learning is an effective technique to facilitate permanent learning among students. It was also found that teachers at the primary level held a positive perception toward experiential learning. Lastly, a majority of language teachers perceived that experiential learning would enable the child to learn better based on a constructivist approach.

Experiential Learning: Vantage Point

Experience is fundamental for understanding mental processes. In addition to the eventual learning outcome, there are a series of behavioural changes that are triggered by experiences during the process of learning. These changes are cognitive, affective, and psychomotor in nature. The experiential learning process provides the ingredients for learners' holistic development through nurturing and harnessing the three domains of learning that include creative thinking, resilience, collaboration to name a few. Although the advantages within experiential learning are far-reaching, a few dominant ones have been listed below:

- **Promotes active learning and creativity:** Experiential learning is one of the best methodologies to foster creative problem-solving. Learners' intellectual, physical and socio-emotional engagement in their experiences allows them to internalize concepts for better understanding, rather than just knowing the facts which are to be regurgitated. Learners have opportunities to be curious and actively engage in investigating, questioning, experimenting, and solving problems creatively to construct meaning out of their learning. Learners steer their learning - holding themselves responsible and accountable for the outcome. Teachers take the role of facilitator and collaborator.

- **Authenticate learning beyond classroom:** Experiential learning transcends traditional classroom-based instruction. Learners apply theoretical concepts to

practical situations. They construct knowledge through opportunities to be inventive on hands-on activities in a multitude of settings. The emergent skills and knowledge broaden their perspective and equips learners to apply them to real world scenarios. Given a real-world simulation, children learn that there are multiple representations to address and resolve challenges. They are encouraged and equipped to seek unique solutions and develop capacity for contributing within their communities. Thereby, providing purpose and authenticity to learning.

- **Fosters self-efficacy and a growth mindset:** Learners have opportunities to deal with unpredictable situations to generate new learning. They learn from multiple variables such as their own mistakes, natural consequences and logistic limitations. At the same time, they acknowledge the enabling factors such as human and material resources to execute solutions or solve problems successfully. This fosters risk-taking and a growth mindset where every failure is seen as learning. Success at the end of the learning process builds mental strength and self-efficacy. It builds confidence to undertake ventures for newer experiences in the future.

- **Develops collaboration and team spirit:** Experiential learning creates opportunities for shared experience where learners work towards a common goal. They address challenges that require collective problem-solving and decision-making. In the process, learners learn to appreciate each other's strengths and contributions. The integration of multiple perspectives and mutual knowledge encourages negotiation and comprehension through cognitive conflict, which helps team members form meaningful relationships. Learners experience a strong sense of unity and team spirit with each successful task.

- **Fosters self-reflection:** Reflecting on the challenges faced, the enabling factors and effectiveness of the solutions lead to analysis, critical thinking, and synthesis of new learning and experiences. Furthermore, the learner's repeated experience makes learning powerful.

- **Improve attitudes towards learning:** Studies from teacher observations have shown that experiential learning pedagogy increases learners' interest in the subject and improves their attitudes and quality of learning. It has been seen to narrow down the gap between theoretical knowledge learnt in the classroom and the skills required for hands-on tasks and practical situations.

Why Experiential Learning as a Pedagogy at Middle School Stage?

The characteristics of adolescent learners at the middle school stage form a strong premise for implementing experiential learning as pedagogy in the classrooms. Piaget (1936) explains that learners at middle school are in the formal operational stage in which they begin to develop logical thinking. Piaget found an increased

learners' interest in dealing with abstract concepts such as freedom, love, and justice, as compared to the things that are perceived by learners (Mangal, 2023, p. 89). Adolescents begin to construct relationships between concrete operations and abstract forms. Learners at this stage can perform hypothetical-deductive reasoning, which is to develop hypotheses based on what might logically occur (Kolb, 1984, p. 36). Adolescents also begin to appreciate that some hypothetical problems can be solved mentally by applying the same rules as would be applied to concrete problems. They employ problem-solving strategies where they draw from a broad knowledge base to develop a theory and generalize it after iterative observations, experimentation, and reflections. Furthermore, learners at middle school are more aware of their thoughts, emotions, apprehensions, and aspirations. The changes in the psychological, cognitive, and physiological aspects of adolescent learners have been closely considered by policymakers. A strong focus on continued development in the three domains—cognitive, affective, and psychomotor—is reflected in a significant policy shift towards adopting experiential learning as pedagogy at the middle school level.

The NEP (2020, p. 6) restructured the 10+2 system in school education into a new pedagogical and curricular structure of 5+3+3+4 covering ages 3–18 years. It is a pivotal modification that draws from the deeper understanding of socio-emotional and intellectual development of children at different stages of their lives. Therefore, the policy emphasizes experiential learning to reform the current Indian education pattern and align it more with the globally accepted educational standard, which would help students apply their knowledge in real-world situations (Rani & Tyagi, 2023). NCF (2023, pp. 40–41) explicitly states that students, by middle school, gradually gain logical thinking, complex emotions, and objective expression to make fair moral judgments. Therefore, learning should rely less on textbooks and more on experiential learning with physical exploration as the main source of content and a pedagogy that is based on activity and discovery. Furthermore, the aspects of positive psychology have heavily contributed to the philosophy of experiential learning (Kong, 2021). Learner motivation and a more observable indicator such as engagement demand a learner-centred pedagogy and a participative learning atmosphere that centres on developing abilities and experiences. Learners' autonomy through experiential learning, paired with relevant academic activities, improves learners' level of motivation and provides autonomy to choose multiple methods and processes to solve problems (Kolb & Kolb, 2011, p. 124).

Role of Teacher in Experiential Learning (Kolb's Model)

Kolb's experiential learning model provides a structure that is widely applicable in classroom settings to differentiate and democratize the learning process. Learning

styles could become instructional strategies (McKeachie, W. J., 1995). Therefore, teachers play a key role in selecting suitable experiences to actively engage and support the learners. Vygotsky's (1920, p. 86) "zone of proximity" created by the teacher is an essential element that bridges the gaps in "unsupported and supported" learning environments. Bradford (2019, p. 97) recommends teachers to reflect and self-question to incorporate activities that meet the pedagogical needs of every learner. Chapman, McPhee, and Proudman (1995, p. 243) believe that a prescribed set of learning experiences may not be "experiential" in nature. They suggest teachers understand the experiential methodology as a series of working principles which must be present in varying degrees at some time during experiential learning. Kolb's learning model provides the "working principles" to teachers by giving them a framework that identifies different learning modes and styles. The learning cycle model is a valuable practical resource for teachers to design learning experiences that navigate through the four learning modes and are tailored to the learning styles.

Furthermore, teachers should understand Piaget's developmental benchmarks and integrate them with Kolb's philosophy behind the learning cycle. Awareness of appropriate instructional methods to suit each learning style is a prerequisite for an effective implementation of Kolb's model. For example, teachers should provide an interactive environment to the converging learners so they can explore and apply detailed information of how a system operates. A teacher should facilitate a converging learning style with a discovery-based approach where these learners discover the relevance or the "how" of a situation through abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. On the other hand, the diverging learning styles are motivated by the "why" of a situation and require explicit instruction as a concrete experience to reflect on their understanding before moving to the other stages of the learning cycle (Kolb, 1984).

Suggestions for Teachers

Following are points that teachers should bear in mind when planning and executing the experiential learning process (Chapman, McPhee, & Proudman, 1995):

Content and process: There must be a balance of the experiential activities, the relevant content, and conceptual knowledge. Having knowledge of Kolb's learning style helps teachers to understand the importance of questioning strategies, explicit instruction, and lecture-method in the experiential learning process.

Monitor without judgment: The teacher must create a safe space for students to work through their own process of self-discovery. They shouldn't judge learners on their thinking, effort, pace, success, and failure.

Purposeful learning: In the experiential learning process, learners choose their learning and self-teach themselves. Therefore, learning must be meaningful for the learner. Teachers should be aware of learning modes and styles to plan learning activities that are personally relevant to the learner.

Encouraging the big picture perspective: Experiential activities must allow the students to make connections between the learning they are doing and the world. Teachers should design activities that build the learner's ability to see relationships in complex systems and find a way to work within them.

Creating emotional investment: Students must be fully immersed in the experience, not merely doing what they feel is required of them. Teachers should be able to engage the learner in the experiential process to an extent that it strikes a critical and personal chord within the learner.

Assessment and constructive feedback: Learning needs to be observable, measured, quantified, and defined in terms of the learning outcomes, capacities, and curricular goals. Teachers should provide timely feedback as it provides a vehicle for integrating all components of instructional practices on which learners reassess their attempts and modify their behaviour for new experiences.

Reflection and re-discovery: Learners should be able to reflect on their own learning to gain insight into themselves and their interactions with the world. Teachers should provide space that is safe for self-exploration where learners analyze and rediscover themselves by being resilient to alter their own value system.

Meaningful relationships: An important aspect for teachers is getting learners to see their learning in the context of the whole world. Teachers should employ instructional strategies that help learners see the relationships between learner with self, learner and teacher, learner to peers, and the learning environment. This could result in enhanced learning outcomes from collaborative tasks and reflective practices.

Collaboration and communication: Teachers should foster collaborative and team spirit through experiential learning opportunities such as hands-on activities, role-plays and simulations, flipped classroom, field trips, excursions to museums and cultural sites, community service, internships, and projects. Shared experiences from a variety of sources such as environment and society develop lifelong skills to communicate and collaborate beyond the classroom.

Stepping out of comfort zones: Learning is enhanced when students are given the opportunity to operate outside of their own perceived comfort zones. Learners should do this not only in their physical environment, but also in the social environment such as being accountable for their actions and taking responsibility for the consequences.

Conclusion

In the present scenario, learners' educational needs gravitate towards purposeful learning where they are active participants in gaining skills that are successfully applied in the real world. The ancient Indian knowledge system pays importance to holistic development of the learners. Unfortunately, the intent has not translated up to the mark to the Indian school education that is riddled by rote memorization and regurgitation of facts. The above literature highlights the importance of experiential learning to create an educational environment where middle school learners are motivated to engage and participate in their learning through experience. The generative and transformative vigor of experiences in the learning process is a strong premise to consider experiential learning as a pedagogical practice. The article explores the need, practicality, and effectiveness of Kolb's learning model in the middle school to provide meaningful learning experiences. The model fosters a learner-centric approach where learners are not passive recipients but active participants. Adolescent learners in middle school begin to gain their unique cognitive abilities, communicative and creative problem-solving skills. Kolb's learning stages and learning styles provide a template for the teachers to know, identify, and cater to all learners in developing critical thought, creativity, autonomy, and emergent skills.

References

- Akella, D. (2010). Learning together: Kolb's experiential theory and its application. *Journal of Management & Organization*, Albany State University, Albany GA, USA, 16(1).
- Bradford, D. L. (2019). Ethical issues in experiential learning. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1052562918807500>
- Chapagain, P. (2025). Panchakosha: Foundations for holistic child development. *Journal of Training and Development*, 7. <https://doi.org/10.3126/jtd.v7i1.74977>
- Chapman, S., McPhee, P., & Proudman, B. (1995). What is experiential education? *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/10538259920150020>
- Che, F., Strang, K. D., & Vajjhala, N. R. (2021). Using experiential learning to improve student attitude and learning quality in software engineering education. *International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 2(1).
- Dewey, J. (1997). *Experience and education*. New York: Touchstone.
- Hanfstingl, B., Arzenšek, A., Apschner, J., & Göllly, K. I. (2021). Assimilation and accommodation: A systematic review of the last two decades. *European Psychologist*, 27(4), 320–337. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040/a000463>
- Jantzen, C. (2013). Experiencing and experiences: A psychological framework. <https://doi.org/10.4337/9781781004227.00013>
- Jarrell, B. (2019). *Experiential learning of students on a study abroad trip to Australia: A qualitative study* [Master's thesis, University of Tennessee]. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/5671

- Joshi, D. (2020). Gurukul and modern education system in India: Holistic outlook. *International Journal of Engineering Research and Management*, 8(2).
- Kimble, G. A. (1961). *Hilgard and Marquis' Conditioning and Learning*. Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Kishor, R. (2020). *International Journal for Innovative Research in Multidisciplinary Field*, 6(6). ISSN: 2455-0620
- Kolb, A., & Kolb, D. (2011). *The Kolb learning style inventory – Version 4.0*. Experience Based Learning Systems, Inc.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as a source of learning and development*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall. <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/235701029>
- Kong, Y. (2021). The role of experiential learning on students' motivation and classroom engagement. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.771272>
- Kumar, A., & Lakra, N. F. (2023). An analysis of the perception of teachers towards the use of experiential learning approach in schools of Delhi. *Journal of Teacher Education and Teaching*, 3(1). Bright Brain Publishing.
- Lone, S. A., & Kour, S. J. (2024). Vivification of experiential learning with reference to NEP 2020. *The International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.25215/1201.151>
- Massari, G., et al. (2017). *A handbook on experiential education: Pedagogical guidelines for teachers and parents*. Alexandru Ioan Cuza Publishing House.
- McKeachie, W. J., & Svinivki, M. (2011). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers* (13th ed.). Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Mehra, V., & Kaur, J. (2010). Effect of experiential learning strategy on enhancement of environmental awareness among primary school students. *Indian Educational Review*, 47(2), 30–44.
- Menix, K. D. (1996). Domains of learning: Interdependent components of achievable learning outcomes. *Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 27(5). <https://doi.org/10.3928/0022-0124-19960901-04>
- Nagarathinam, D., & Vani, R. (Eds.). (2018). *New Perspectives in ELT* (Vol. 18, Issue 4). Language in India. ISSN 1930 2940.
- National Curriculum Framework School Education. (2023). Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- National Policy of Education. (2020). Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- Pamungkas, S. F., Widiastuti, I., & Suhamo. (2019). Kolb's experiential learning for vocational education in mechanical engineering. *AIP Publishing*. <https://doi.org/10.1063/1.5112427>
- Paulsen, M. K. (2020). Appearance of experience as form and process. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 861–879. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12124-020-09526-3>
- Rajguru, N. (2024). The Gurukul system: Ancient pedagogical practices and their role in shaping Indian knowledge traditions. *International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research (IJFMR)*, 6(6).

- Rani, K., & Kumar, V. (2023). Experiential learning in school education: Prospects and challenges. *International Journal of Advance and Applied Research*, 10(2). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7652609>
- Sachdeva, S. (2017). Making economics classrooms exciting: Role of experiential learning. *International Journal of Advanced Educational Research*, 2(5), 83–92.
- Schwartz, M. (2012). Best practices in experiential learning. *Experiential Learning Report*. [https://www.mcgill.ca/elndoc_ryerson_bestpracticesryerson.pdf](https://www.mcgill.ca/eln/files/elndoc_ryerson_bestpracticesryerson.pdf)
- Skinner, B. F. (1953). *Science and human behavior: Some further consequences* (Vol. 21). <https://doi.org/10.1037/gpr0000117>
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.