

HOLISTIC LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL AND HYBRID MODE - INNOVATIVE APPROACH IN THE NEW NORMAL CLASSROOM OF TODAY

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Abstract

The pandemic has forced every academician to explore new learning approaches in the new normal era. The present paper is based on the review of Idrizi, Filiposka and Trajkovic's paper entitled, ' Hybrid learning-the new normal' and Yangtao Kong's, ' The Role of Experiential learning on students' motivation and Classroom Engagement'. The author has made an attempt to establish that in the modern era when teachers incorporate Experiential learning through Hybrid learning approach, students are sure to gain a concrete learning experience thereby equipping them to upskill themselves and also to face various challenges in life. This approach will ensure that learning takes place from all dimensions and will help students apply knowledge gained to real life situations.

Keywords: *Hybrid learning, Experiential learning, pedagogy, learning experience, holistic learning.*

INTRODUCTION

“The principal goal of education in the schools should be creating men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done.” —Jean Piaget

A living being learns effectively when all his/ her sensory organs are involved. When all our five sensory organs of hearing, touch, sight, taste and smell, meaningful knowledge is gained. Students do not learn just by listening or watching teachers or parents around them. They learn best when they are allowed to perform or when they are given hands on experience. Thus the actual outcome depends on the kind of learning experience given to the student. With the onset of the Pandemic in 2020, the need of the hour changed with regards to the type of learning modes available. Educators around the world left no stone unturned to ensure that education reaches every corner of the world. Although all of us know that there are four main types of learners namely Visual, auditory, reading/ writing and kinesthetic Learner, the covid pandemic has brought to the forefront two main modes of learning- namely Online mode and

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offline mode. Identifying your students as visual, auditory, reading/writing, kinaesthetic, learners, and aligning your overall curriculum with these learning styles, will prove to be beneficial for the entire classroom but adopting the best mode of learning will help in achieving the aim of Education- thereby empowering humans and getting them ready to face challenges of life efficiently.

Hybrid learning is a way of learning that incorporates both online and offline (classroom-based) modes of learning. This type of education is very helpful in assisting students to progress from fully guided education to self-motivated learning. It is a form of synchronous learning that is conducted both physically and remotely.

Online Learning

A learning environment with no physical location and in which the instructors and students are separated by space is known as Online learning. This type of environment normally is housed within a learning management system (LMS) framework, that includes not only areas of information deposit for the learner's engagement, but also the additional instructional tools such as assignment submission and evaluation areas, grade interface, bulletin board discussions, chat sessions, small group areas, in-course private mail, and many online learning environments offer additional plug-in social learning resources such as video conferencing. This environment may be synchronous, asynchronous, or a mix of both synchronous and asynchronous experiences and engagements.

Offline Learning

Also referred to as traditional training, Offline Education means a student needs to go to a school, in a classroom and attend a class face to face with a teacher. The offline classes follow a structured teaching mechanism for imparting education to the students.

The current scenario demands that students get the best learning experience and at the same time they are aware about all technological/ digital developments and also students must make constructive use of the time available to them. A mode of learning that offers all the above is

Hybrid learning.

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The paper ‘**Hybrid Learning- the new normal**’ presented at the 5th International Scientific Conference on Business and Information Technologies authored by Ermira Idrizi, Sonja Filiposka and Vladimir Trajkovik reveals that Hybrid learning strives to quench our thirst for knowledge by combining in-person and remote training. This form of learning holds a great deal of potential for future education as it is a modern form of education delivery and it also simultaneously satisfies learning objectives. This paper aims to observe the impact of hybrid learning on achievements of students and establishes that although there are some flaws, it is however a more comprehensive mode of learning for students. The concluding statement of this paper states that a future for Hybrid learning is assured. However, the touch of a school environment and the teachers’ personal touch cannot be done away with if students are expected to have a holistic learning experience. Therefore, it is very important to utilize School time to provide students with practical skills or hands on experience and social skills that will result in a comprehensive Hybrid learning experience.

Thus, it becomes evident that Experiential Learning must be incorporated into Hybrid Learning for providing a quality learning experience to students.

Experiential Learning

This learning style whereby the student learns by doing is called Experiential Learning. This learning approach is regarded as one of the most important and effective method of learning as it encourages the students to apply knowledge gained to real world or day to day activities. This promotes a deeper understanding of the concept thereby not only making it more personal and meaningful to the student but also leading to an in depth understanding of concepts.

David Kolb’s Experiential learning theory published in 1984 works on two levels: a four - stage cycle of learning and four separate learning styles.

*Concrete learning wherein a student has a new experience or interprets a past experience in a new way.

*Reflective observation wherein the student reflects on what this experience means personally to him /her.

*Abstract conceptualisation: wherein the students form his/her own ideas or adjusts his/her thinking based on the experience and reflection.

*Active experimentation wherein the student applies the new ideas to real life situations.

Much of Kolb's theory is related to the learner's internal cognitive processes. According to Kolb, Learning involves acquisition of abstract concepts which can be applied flexibly in various situations. In his theory, new experiences provide impetus for the development of new concepts.

"Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 38).

The paper entitled 'The Role of Experiential Learning on Students' Motivation and Classroom Engagement' published on 2021 Oct 22 by Yangtao Kong affirms Kolb's paradigm which highlights the significance of involvement of a student in all learning processes and reiterates the fact that experience contributes to learning (Zhai et al., 2017). EL is a method of teaching that allows learners to learn while "Do, Reflect, and Think and Apply" (Butler et al., 2019, p. 12). This paper focuses on the contributions of Experiential Learning to classroom engagement. It goes on to highlight that this method helps students think out of the box and apply the knowledge obtained to real life situations. Experiential Learning ensures that learning takes place from all dimensions thus guaranteeing holistic education. Thus, it can be established that when Experiential learning is incorporated into Hybrid learning by explaining concepts through the online process and using school time to concretise the concepts through experiential learning , a student gains an enriched learning experience.

There are many ways that experiential learning is used every day. Some examples include:

- Going to the zoo to learn about animals through observation, instead of reading about them.
- Growing a garden to learn about photosynthesis instead of watching a movie about it.
- Hoping on a bicycle to try and learn to ride, instead of listening to your parent explain the concept.
- Roleplay
- Art projects
- Field trips
- Science Experiments
- Internship

- Interactive classroom games

There are many benefits of experiential learning:

- Opportunity to immediately apply knowledge. Experiential learning can allow students to immediately apply things they are learning to real-world experiences. This helps them retain the information better.
- Promotion of teamwork. Experiential learning often involves working in a team, so learning in this setting allows students to practice teamwork.
- Improved motivation. Students are more motivated and excited about learning in experiential settings. Experiments are exciting and fun for students, and they will be passionate about learning.
- Opportunity for reflection. Students using the experiential model are able to spend time reflecting about what they are experiencing and learning. This is valuable as they are able to better retain information when they can think about what's happening to them.
- Real world practice. Students can greatly benefit from learning that helps them prepare for the real world. Experiential learning is focused on using real situations to help students learn, so they are then better prepared for their future.

A paper, 'Rethinking Experiential learning for the hybrid workforce' authored by Jennifer Fletcher, Elisabeth Valiente- Riedl and Leela Cejnar states that the post pandemic classroom must not only ensure that teachers are trained with digital teaching skills but also Experiential learning curricula should be weaved into Hybrid learning approach. This kind of an innovative approach is the need of the hour.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the school administration and teachers have realized that some amount of flexibility is required both during the current situation and even in the future. Based on the review of the papers, it can be established that Hybrid Learning incorporated with Experiential Learning is the best form of learning which will go a long way in equipping students with skills to face various challenges in life ahead. When Students experience in person support combined with the flexibility of doing coursework online, it will help students to build team spirit with fellow classmates as they work together. The student is free from the stress of a fixed classroom schedule. Teachers and students together must realise the benefits of Hybrid and Experiential Learning and accordingly teachers must design their

pedagogy in such a way that it realises the intended outcome, thereby providing an enriching experience to students.

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