

STUDY ON COMPETENCY DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Dr. Rose Kiran Pinto¹

Abstract

Experiential Learning is one of the most important contemporary areas of scholarships in educational psychology where the terms' informal learning, prior learning and practice-based learning are used in different contexts. Experiential Learning focuses on experience of teachers developing their classroom practice. Therefore, to improve the quality of pre-service teachers, student teachers must be provided with various kinds of experiential activities that would help them to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking. By applying knowledge to experiences, they participate in the process of learning by doing. It provides opportunities to learn in the real world setting outside the classroom. Such experiences not only enhance knowledge of the content area, but has a lasting impact on their academic performance, thus developing confidence and independence. As the New Education Policy 2020 outlines, critical thinking and skill development as major priorities among students, the biggest challenge would be to architect learning experiences for teachers so that education becomes accessible, equitable and inclusive.

The article consists of theoretical perspectives and related literature in enhancing teacher competencies through experiential learning. A critical analysis of related studies highlights various activities in which the teachers are trained during their teacher education program and are able to transcend these competencies when they become full-fledged teachers.

Keywords: *Experiential learning, teacher competencies, teacher education program.*

INTRODUCTION

The perspective of learning is called experiential for two reasons. The first is to tie it clearly to its intellectual origins in the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget. The second reason emphasizes the pivotal role that experience plays in the learning process. Experiential Learning theory is a holistic perspective on learning that combines experience, perception, cognition and behavior. (Kolb, 2015)

¹ Assistant Professor, St Ann's College of Education (Autonomous), Mangaluru

The general education set up considers two main concerns in the professional development of teachers. This involves organizing experiential activities and developing competencies of students. High quality pre-service program of teacher education strives to prepare teachers to improve the learning process by offering them opportunities to upgrade their knowledge and skills over the full length of their career. For the professional development of the teachers, it is essential to engage students with new and innovative ideas about education and try out new classroom activities. It focuses on experience of teachers developing their classroom practice. Therefore, to improve the quality of pre-service teachers, the student teachers must be provided with various kinds of experiential activities to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking. By applying knowledge to experiences they participate in the process of learning by doing. The theoretical basis in conducting research on competency development of teachers through experiential learning has its roots in constructivism as described by Piaget (1950), Bruner (1961), Vygotsky (1978), Bransford, Brown, & Cocking (2000), Kim (2005), and others.

This article presents an overview of how teacher competencies could be developed through experiential learning, thus forming a constructivist perspective in the teaching learning process.

RATIONALE OF STUDY

Teachers play a significant role in character building, personal development, a transformer of moral, social ethical values and act as a guide, counsellor, inspirer and to encourage the students for social change and architect of the nation. Therefore, a sound program of teacher education is needed for the preparation of effective teachers and to bring qualitative improvement in education system, it is essential to bring qualitative improvement in teacher education at all levels. A good teacher education programme will help in building various competencies among teacher trainees. These in- service teachers will have a great responsibility to improve the educational standards remarkably by increasing the level of achievement of their students and to bring out the potentialities hidden in them.

Experiential Learning along with teaching competencies plays an important role to bridge between practical experience and theoretical conceptualization. Experiential learning provides theoretical knowledge with hands on experiences which helps them to be creative, skilful and effective teachers. It also provides essential skill development opportunities and helps them to gain skilled proficiency in the teaching learning process. Experiential Learning is a way to

enrich the knowledge of students. The findings of the present study will also benefit teachers to affirm the importance of experiential learning activities such as a variety of field-based activities, pedagogical approaches, classroom experiences, service learning, internship, role play, scaffolding, dramatization, and so on to provide scope for prospective teachers in the teacher education program to explore different aspects of their interests in a specific subject.

A Theoretical framework concerning Competency Development

The term 'competence' is used to express one's quality of being competent, possessing adequate knowledge, professional qualification and skill, or capacity.

Teacher competencies were first developed during pre-service teacher education and were further updated and strengthened during repeated in-service teacher education program. An effective teacher is one who is a competent and committed professional practitioner. Hence the task of promoting competencies and professional commitment must become an integral part of pre-service and in-service teacher education. In this article, the researcher speaks about developing teacher competencies through experiential learning.

Teacher Competencies listings by NCTE, 1998

These are Personal, Professional and social and are briefly described under ten interrelated teacher competencies by NCTE for making teachers professionally competent.

Contextual Competencies- It goes beyond contextual intelligence and involves action learning, innovative thinking and take action of their teaching with desired behavioral changes.

Conceptual Competencies- include knowledge about significant characteristics of child development at different stages to transact curriculum effectively

Content Competencies- includes enriching students' knowledge by conducting joyful activities through media intervention.

Transaction Competencies- include the use of different methods, activities and technology in an effective and integrated manner through teacher pupil interaction

Educational Activities Related Competency -includes ability of the teacher to organize curricular, co-curricular, social and cultural activities to achieve educational objectives.

Competencies to Develop Teaching Learning Material - includes preparation of innovative and interesting teaching learning material for making teaching learning process interesting, easy, and activity based.

Evaluation Competencies- refers to the ability of a teacher to carry out continuous evaluation and maintain observation records to evaluate the likes and dislikes, habits, value and attitudes of the children and undertake action research.

Management Competencies- involves the effective and appropriate use of educational aids and active utilization of available human resources to achieve high quality educational objectives.

Competencies related to Working with Parents, Community and Other Agencies - includes cooperation of parents in teaching process.

STUDIES RELATED TO TEACHER COMPETENCIES CONCERNING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

A Book chapter on ‘Teaching in Digital Age’ by Simon Fraser University gives a wide range of design models of experiential learning to be used by in-service teachers such as: laboratory, workshop or studio work, apprenticeship, problem-based learning, case-based learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning and co-operative learning. (International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change. www.ijicc.net Volume 15, Issue 10, 2021) (Kolb, 2009; Beard, 2010; Kolb, 2014; Silberman, 2007; Vince & Reynolds, 2008; Andresen, 2000; Bates, 2018)

Studies by (Baldwin, Persing, & Magnuson, 2004; Ewert & Sibthorp, 2009; Keys & Bryan, 2001) revealed the changes seen in teachers with regard to classroom practice, student teacher relationships, management skills and enhanced social and professional behaviors.

An online Science Direct Journal quotes an article by Ramesh Babua, A, Arulanand N & Satish Chandran (2019) revealed that academic institutions play a very important role to mould young teachers by inculcating the necessary skills

Study conducted by Benjamin Goldberg, Michael Hoffman, (2017) discuss about integration activities like adaptive training, real time assessments, competency tracking and total learning architecture to map scenarios with assessments for competency development of in-service teachers through experiential learning.

Research by Carina Girvan, Claire Conneely & Brendan (2016) explore that Teachers' self-reflections, observations and interviews demonstrate how the process and outcomes influenced their beliefs, resulting in meaningful changes in classroom practice through experiential learning approach.

Butler and Leahy (2015) conclude that a school-focused, job-embedded, sustainable framework for professional development could effectively support teachers in Ireland to move from traditional approaches.

Camburn and Han (2015) found that teachers reflected on experiences that focused on classroom teaching, and those who engaged in reflection more often were more likely to report a change their professional practice.

Minott. (2010) focused on the experience of teachers developing their practice in the classroom: experimenting, reflecting and familiarizing new theories, practices and content they have been introduced to in their own professional context. This process can be individual with reflection used as a tool for self-direction

Stoll et al. (2012) in the research identifies features of effective professional development in relevance to the use of experiential learning model from within the professional context outside the classroom. Teachers' self-reflections, observations and interviews influenced their beliefs

In a research study which addressed issues pertaining to ongoing professional development of teachers, Roberts (2012) presented a three-phase approach to teacher professional development for the introduction and adoption of innovative pedagogic practices, where experiences need to real.

Day and Sachs (2004) highlight the personal beliefs and values as responsible for engaging teachers in meaningful professional development experiences.

William (2010) highlights the importance of scaffolding and reflection, as explained by Bridge21 approach, where teachers reflect by observing their learners, their own experience and how they could begin to integrate the approach into their own professional practice.

Fullan (2001) identifies effective changes of professional practice, as well as individual and collaborative reflection on their experience of implementing new initiatives are necessary for development of teacher competencies

Summary of Related Studies with its Findings

Author	Title	Findings
(Beard2010; Kolb, 2014;Silberman, 2007;Vince & Reynolds, 2008;; Bates, 2018)	design models of experiential learning to be used by in-service teachers	These include laboratory, workshop or studio work, apprenticeship, problem-based learning, case-based learning, project-based learning, inquiry-based learning and co-operative learning
Benjamin Goldberg, Michael Hoffman, (2017)	Integration of activities for competency development of in-service teachers	The suggestive activities are adaptive training, real time assessments, competency tracking and total learning architecture to map scenarios with assessments
Clairre Conneely & Brendan (2016)	Relevance of using experiential model for Pre-service teachers	Process and outcomes influenced teachers’ beliefs resulting in changing their classroom practices
Roberts (2012)	Issues pertaining to professional development of teachers	Teachers need real practical experiences with the adoption of pedagogic practices
William (2010)	Alterations to Professional Practice explained by Bridge21 approach	Transfer from Traditional approach to learner centered approach using scaffolding and reflection
Fullan (2001)	Effective schools built up by professional learning	Enhancing School capacity through knowledge, skills and dispositions of individual teachers; professional community, program coherence, leadership

Classroom activities that enhance teacher competencies are:

Inspirational stories: Teachers derive inspiration from their own extraordinary life experiences and endeavor to bring them into the classroom in ways that engage students in the

process of inquiry.

Inquiry Process: Guiding the students to work through the inquiry experience utilizing proper scientific approaches to come to correct understanding.

Modeling Involvement: An important part of teaching is when a teacher models how to deal with content and make sense of phenomena.

Co-creating subject Identity: any form of identity construction is based on experience and taking up roles. An area of research interest relating to the teacher's profession is whether its enhancement may result in co-creation of subject identity with their students.

Content Engagement: The more experiences the teacher has with the content the better they understand it and more likely they will expand ways express understanding.

Scaffolding and reflection: This technique helps teachers to connect previous knowledge to new concepts and provides a base for learning with techniques: Advance organizers, Concept and mind maps and instruction. This creates higher engagement and a supportive environment.

Self-evaluation: Cultivate the ability to see objectively through self-analysis and reflection

Pedagogical learning: Teacher's efficacy is developed through these products- deep knowledge of content area; Professional experience; development of teaching skills differentiated instruction

Adaptability: respond effectively to the diverse needs of students

Communication: active listening, non-verbal language, consistent constructive feedback, confidence and self-esteem

Organisation: careful planning for academic advancement and better performance

Innovation, imagination and creativity: trying new strategies and techniques, motivating students to be life-long learners, promoting collaborative work

Leadership: openness and reliability, a positive role model, qualified to be a mentor and guide, being an agent of change

Continuous learning: maintain and improve efficiency in teaching learning process

CHALLENGES TO FUTURE STUDIES

- Study on effect of different experiential models such as Kolb's experiential learning, Wisconsin 4-H and ECHO model and teacher competencies could be considered.

- The role of teachers' experiential learning and reflection enhancing autonomous, critical thinking and professional development as per NEP 2020 could be studied.
- The effectiveness of Experiential learning in teaching different subjects could be tested.
- Research on how experiential learning is used to create an inclusive classroom and develop professional identity could be experimented.

The implications of teacher competencies to future teachers are as follows:

- **A transaction learning strategy:** in which educators and learners engage in direct experience and focused reflection, to construct knowledge, develop skills, and contextualize the meaning of the experience.
- **The Process of knowledge construction:** actively looking for events, instances, and reflections in which the process of knowledge construction and meaning making takes place through evidence of, or references to: collaborative learning and deep personal introspection
- **Professional Identity:** a theoretical construct existing in the mind of the individual and gives rise to sense of self which is a person's consciousness of his or her own being (Burke 2009).

CONCLUSION

Teachers are prominent figures who can make a lasting impact on academic and personal life of students. Stressing the importance of developing teacher competencies through teacher education plays a pivotal role in intellectual growth of students. Thus, from the research studies, it is reflected that many schools support experiential learning models where problem based learning and project based learning have proved to be prominent and used across many subject domains and levels of education. Thus it leads to better understanding and develops skills for future teachers to grow professionally with enhancing competencies in problem solving, critical thinking, communication skills and knowledge management.

REFERENCES

- Andresen, L., Boud, D., & Cohen, R. (2000). Experience-based learning. In *Understanding adult education and training* (Second, Vol. 2, pp. 225–239). Sydney: Allen & Unwin.
ISBN: 9781003118299

- Goldberg, B., Davis, F., Riley, J.M., Boyce, and M.W.: Adaptive training across Hanoi Education Investment and Development JSC, C. (2019). Experiential activities series. Hanoi, Vietnam: Vietnam Education Publishing House.
- Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009). Experiential learning theory: A dynamic, holistic approach to management learning, education and development. In S. J. Armstrong & C. V. Fukami (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of management learning, education and development* (p. 42). London: SAGE Publications. doi:10.4135/9780857021038.n3
- Kolb, D. A. (2014). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (Second). New Jersey: Pearson Education. ISBN-13:978-0-13-389240-6; ISBN-10: 0-13-389240-9.
- Silberman, M. L. (Ed.). (2007). *the handbook of experiential learning*. San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons. ISBN-13: 978-0787982584; ISBN-10: 078798258X.
- Vince, R., & Reynolds, M. (Eds.). (2008). *Handbook of experiential learning and management education*. New York: Oxford University Press. ISBN-13: 978-0199217632; ISBN-10: 0199217637
