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EXPERIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE: DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO EDUCATION AND NEP 2020

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

It is desirable to address the issue of the relationship between knowing and doing directly since there are specific educational issues related to human society. The modern era began with a revolt against this viewpoint, an appeal to experience, and an attack on so-called purely rational concepts on the grounds that they were either merely manifestations of institutionalized class interest and prejudice, or that they needed to be defended by the outcomes of tangible experiences. However, a number of factors caused experience to be viewed as pure cognition, ignoring its inherent active and emotional phases, and to be associated with the passive receiving of discrete sensations. As a result, the new theory's impact on education was limited to eliminating some of the bookishness of earlier approaches rather than achieving a comprehensive restructuring. By emphasizing experiential learning, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 moves the emphasis from rote memorization to skill development and real-world application. This entails learning by doing, with a focus on experiential learning, education that incorporates the arts and sports, and storytelling. This research aims to understand how experience and knowledge are applied in educational settings and the current findings in the NEP 2020.

Keywords: *Experience, Knowledge, Approaches to Education, Educationalist, NEP 2020*

Experience and Knowledge: Opposing Views

Theory and practice, intelligence and execution, knowledge and activity are all in opposition to livelihood and relaxation. The latter set of oppositions undoubtedly stems from the same societal circumstances that give rise to the former conflict, but some specific educational issues associated with them make it desirable to address the relationship and purported separation of knowing and doing in detail (Schwartz, 2019). The idea that knowledge has a greater and more spiritual value than practical work and comes from a higher source has been around for a while. When it comes to the history of conscious assertion, we can trace it back to Plato and Aristotle's ideas about experience and reason (Bartells, & May, 2015). Despite their various differences, these thinkers believed that experience is primarily a matter of practical concern, together with material interests for its purpose and the body regarding its organs. Contrarily, knowledge existed independently of practical reference and derived from an entirely immaterial intellect; it was related to spiritual or ideal concerns (Bereiter, 2014). Once more, experience was never self-sufficient; it always required need, want, and lack. In contrast, rational knowledge was thorough and whole in and of itself. As a result, intellectual understanding dealt with timeless truth, whereas practical life was always changing (Bartells, & May, 2015). The reason for this stark contrast is that Athenian philosophy started out as a critique of tradition and custom as benchmarks for behavior and knowledge. It discovered that reason was the only suitable framework for belief and action in its quest to find something to replace them. It immediately followed that reason was better to experience since custom and tradition were associated with experience (Schwartz, 2019). Plato's claim that philosophers ought to rule as kings can best be interpreted as a claim that human affairs should be governed by reason rather than habit, appetite, impulse, or emotion. While the latter represent diversity and strife, irrational swings from one estate to another, the former ensures unity, order, and the rule of law (Brown, 2013).

It is easy to find the justifications for associating experience with the unpleasant state of affairs, which is represented by a rule of simple custom. Colonizations, migrations, conflicts, and increased trade and travel have all expanded people's horizons. It was discovered that there were significant differences in the customs and beliefs of various communities. Athens had become accustomed to civil unrest; faction conflict appeared to have taken over the city's fortunes. As leisure time increased and the horizon expanded, numerous new truths about nature were discovered, which sparked interest and conjecture. The circumstance tended to make people wonder if there is anything universal and unchanging in the world of nature and civilization (Schwartz, 2019). The senses were the apparatus of experiencing change, the varied and the unstable as opposed to the constant and uniform,

while reason was the capacity that allowed for the comprehension of the universal principle and essence. Experience was made up of the outcomes of the senses' labor, which were stored in memory and imagination and used in the skill that habit provided (Brown, 2013). Thus, the many handicrafts – the skills of peace and war – represent experience at its best. To develop their skills, the soldier, flute player, and cobbler have all experienced the discipline of experience (Davitt, 2011). This indicates that the body's organs, especially the senses, have come into contact with objects on a regular basis, and that the outcome of these interactions has been maintained and solidified until the ability to predict and act upon it has been established. This was the defining definition of the word empirical. It implied a knowledge and skill that was based on the outcomes of numerous independent experiments rather than on insight into principles. It articulated the concept currently communicated via the method of trial and error, emphasizing the trials' more or less coincidental nature (Brown, 2013).

From this situation, the philosophers quickly came to certain generalizations. Wants, desires, and appetites are all linked to the senses. They focus on how things relate to our joys and sorrows, to gratifying our desires, and to the well-being of our bodies rather than the actuality of things (Drayson, 2012). Only the body's life, which is merely a stable foundation for a higher life, depends on them. Therefore, experience is unquestionably material in nature. It deals with physical objects in connection to the body. On the other hand, the immaterial, the ideal, and the spiritual are grasped by reason, or science. Words like sensuous, carnal, material, worldly, and interests imply that experience is ethically hazardous, whereas pure reason and spirit imply something morally admirable (Dam et al., 2013). Furthermore, experience clings to an unbreakable bond with the moving, the mysteriously shifting, the multifarious, and the various. Its content is unreliable and inconsistent by nature. Because it is unstable, it is anarchic. Because it varies from person to person, day to day, and even from nation to nation, the man who relies on experience is unaware of what he is relying on. In addition to carrying conflict in its wake, its association with the many, with different details, has the same effect (Glick, 2011).

Naturally, claiming that all of these differences remained in complete technical definiteness would not be appropriate. However, they all had a significant impact on men's later thought processes and perspectives on schooling. Under this estimate of the respective values of experience and reason – or, to put it another way, of the practical and the intellectual – the disdain for the body, the disdain for the senses and sense observation, the belief that knowledge is high and worthy in the degree that it deals with ideal symbols instead of the concrete, the disdain for particulars unless they are deductively brought under a universal, and the devaluation of arts and crafts as intellectual instrumentalities – all sought refuge and found sanction (Glick, 2011). The tradition was maintained and strengthened by medieval philosophy. to experience the eternal bliss that comes from knowing reality in relation to the ultimate reality, or God. Man's ultimate goal, to which activity is subservient, was contemplation of supreme reality. Experience dealt with commonplace, secular, and profane matters that were practically necessary but not as significant as supernatural subjects of study. We can easily comprehend the enormous power exercised by the persistent preference for the intellectual over the practical not only in educational philosophies but also in higher schools when we combine this motivation with the force derived from the literary character of Roman education and the Greek philosophic tradition, as well as the preference for studies that clearly distinguished the aristocratic class from the lower classes (Schwartz, 2019).

The Modern Theory of Experience and Knowledge

The notion of knowledge and experience that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries must be mentioned. Generally speaking, it offers us a nearly total reversal of the traditional theory of the relationship between experience and reason (Devitt, 2011). Experience was defined by Plato as habituation, or the preservation of the net product of numerous previous random experiments. Reason was the idea of change, advancement, and greater control. To be devoted to the cause of reason meant to see things as they truly were, overcoming the constraints of tradition. The situation was reversed for the modern reformers. Reason, universal principles, and a priori notions were either just indurated prejudices or dogmas imposed by authority that masqueraded and found protection under august names, or they were blank forms that needed to be filled in by experience and sense observations in order to gain significance and validity (Glick, 2011). In order to escape being held captive by ideas that, in Bacon's words, anticipated nature and forced only human opinions onto her, it was imperative that she use experience to learn about nature. The authority infringement was shown by the appeal to experience. It meant being receptive to fresh perspectives; being eager to learn and invent rather than engrossed in cataloguing and organizing pre-existing concepts and proving them by the relationships they maintained with one another. It was the bursting into the consciousness of things as they truly were, without the curtain of preconceived notions covering them (Drayson, 2012).

There were two changes. Experience lost the useful significance that it had since Plato's time. It became a term for something intellectual and cognitive, and it stopped referring to methods of doing and being done to. It referred to the understanding of material that should support and validate the reasoning exercise. Both his opponent and the contemporary philosophic empiricist have viewed experience as a means of knowing. The only query was, '*How good is it?'* If the term intellectualism is used to describe a strong and nearly exclusive interest in knowledge in isolation, the outcome was even more intellectualism than that of ancient philosophy (Devitt, 2011). Practice was viewed as a sort of tag-end or aftermath of knowledge rather than as being subordinate to it. The educational outcome just served to validate the absence of active occupations from the classroom, unless they were introduced for strictly practical purposes, such as the practice of particular habits. Second, viewing the mind as merely receptive resulted from the concern in experience as a way to base truth on things, on nature. Objects will more genuinely imprint themselves on a mind that is more passive. If the mind took a hand, so to speak, it would undermine its own goal by vitiating actual knowledge in the process of knowing (Roy & Saha, 2021). A greatest level of responsiveness was optimal. Empiricism thus turned into a philosophy of sensationalism, which linked knowledge to the perception and association of sensory

impressions, since the impressions that objects made on the mind were typically referred to as sensations. This sensationalism is lessened in John Locke, the most influential of the empiricists, by acknowledging that certain mental processes, such as comparison, generalization, discernment or discrimination, and abstraction, work up the material of sense into distinct and ordered forms and even evolve new ideas on their own, such as the basic ideas of mathematics and morals (Juhansar, 2021). However, some of his successors took his idea too far, particularly in France in the late eighteenth century; they saw judgment and discernment as strange sensations that are produced in us by the simultaneous existence of other sensations. According to Locke, the mind is a blank slate or wax tablet that is born empty of any thoughts (a tabula rasa). However, he had given it exercises to do based on the information that was given to it. The powers were destroyed by his French successors, who similarly took them from the impressions they had received (Shevetsova, 2021). As a result, almost no system of instruction based solely on senses has ever been explored in a systematic manner, at least not after the early years of infancy. It has been employed merely to fill in rationalistic knowledge (i.e., knowledge of definitions, rules, classifications, and modes of application given through symbols) and as a tool to give dull symbols more interest due to its glaring flaws.

Knowledge and Experience according to Philosophers and Educators

Although most educationalists concur that knowledge and experience are related and essential to learning, they are not the same thing (Roy, 2023b). Experience is the real-world application of knowledge, whereas knowledge is the theoretical comprehension of a subject. Because they challenge established structures, promote inclusive practices, and offer distinct perspectives, women educationalists have had a tremendous impact on the subject (Roy, 2023a; 2023c). Their expertise and experiences have enhanced education, highlighting the value of a range of perspectives and methods in the classroom (Roy, 2023d). Numerous educational theorists, such as John Dewey, support experiential learning, in which pupils gain knowledge by directly interacting with real-world scenarios and then reflecting on those encounters. (Sikandar, 2015).

Prominent Victorian leader Matthew Arnold emphasized the value of culture in creating well-rounded people and a peaceful society, believing that knowledge and experience are essential for both individual and community growth (Adhikari & Saha, 2021). A key component of his conception of culture, he felt that exposure to the '*best that has been thought and said'* was necessary for both individual development and the advancement of society. Arnold believed that education, especially in the humanities, might help develop this culture and encourage critical thinking, which would ultimately result in a society that is more just and enlightened (Fuster, 2019). According to Wollstonecraft, knowledge and experience are essential for both men and women to grow into autonomous, moral, and logical people (Adhikari, 2024; Adhikari & Saha, 2023a). She maintained that in order for women to attain equality and realize their full potential in society, education, which includes both intellectual and moral development, was crucial (Adhikari & Saha, 2022a; 2022b; 2022c). She saw personally the restrictions imposed on women by a lack of education and social expectations via her own experiences as a writer, governess, and teacher. Wollstonecraft's arguments for equal access to knowledge and reason were strengthened by her personal lack of formal education as well as her observations of the inadequate education given to women in her social class (Adhikari & Saha, 2022d; 2022e). The foundation of the Montessori approach to early childhood education is the idea that children learn best via experiential learning and sensory investigation (Adhikari & Saha, 2021a; 2021c). Cognitive development results from the mind and body cooperating as they engage with their environment, as Maria Montessori noted long ago (Adhikari & Saha, 2021d; 2024). The purpose of Montessori Practical Life activities is to teach kids life skills including taking care of their surroundings and themselves (Saha & Adhikari, 2023a). These activities aim to foster the development of critical traits including independence, focus, and coordination in addition to skill acquisition. A fundamental component of the Montessori method, practical life exercises serve as a basis for all other subject areas (Saha & Adhikari, 2023c; 2023d; 2023e). Paulo Freire maintained that education should build upon and verify students' preexisting understanding of the world, emphasizing the critical role that lived experience and prior knowledge play in the learning process. He promoted a dialogical model where students and teachers jointly produce knowledge via critical reflection on their experiences, criticizing traditional banking education, which passively receives knowledge (Apple, 2011). Nel Noddings' theories on experience and knowledge place a strong emphasis on the value of connections, care, and real-world experience in moral development and learning (Adhikari & Saha, 2023b; Saha & Adhikari, 2023b). She contends that knowledge encompasses our experiences and the lessons we draw from them in addition to abstract information. Noddings supports an educational strategy that places a high value on compassionate connections, hands-on experience, and reflection on such encounters (Adhikari, Saha & Sen, 2023). All knowledge comes from experience, according to Swami Vivekananda. He held that true understanding derives from firsthand, personal experience rather than merely academic knowledge and that knowledge is actively acquired within oneself via experience rather than passively accepted. In contrast to rote learning in a traditional classroom, Rabindranath Tagore promoted holistic education that was based on experience and a close relationship with nature. He felt that self-realization should result from education that promotes intellectual, emotional, and spiritual development. The establishment of Visva-Bharati University, which encouraged experiential learning and cross-cultural interaction, is a clear example of Tagore's educational philosophy (Saha & Maji, 2012). Mahatma Gandhi highlighted the need of experience learning for both individual growth and the advancement of society. He held that real knowledge was more than only learning facts; it also involved comprehending and using them via introspection and real-world experience. Nai Talim, his educational philosophy, placed a strong emphasis on learning by doing and applying what was learned to actual circumstances. According to Sri Aurobindo, knowledge is a dynamic, transformational experience rather than just academic comprehension (Saha & Maji, 2013). He underlined that achieving actual knowledge requires a shift in perspective, a becoming process as opposed to merely knowing (Ghosh & Roy, 2023). When different ways of knowing – intellectual, sensory, and emotional – are harmonized within

a higher consciousness, integral knowledge emerges, which eventually leads to a deeper comprehension of reality (Ghosh & Saha, 2024). According to A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, wisdom arises from using knowledge, and knowledge is the cornerstone of success and creativity. He held that lifelong learning, driven by inquiry and curiosity, produces creativity, which in turn stimulates thought and, in the end, makes one great. Kalam urged students to adopt an attitude of inquiry and creativity and emphasized the value of applying knowledge for the sake of humanity (Pandit et al., 2016).

Knowledge and Experience in NEP 2020

NEP 2020 emphasizes a shift towards experiential learning and skill-based education. It encourages learning through hands-on activities, arts and sports integration, and storytelling-based pedagogy:

"The Middle Stage will comprise three years of education, building on the pedagogical and curricular style of the Preparatory Stage, but with the introduction of subject teachers for learning and discussion of the more abstract concepts in each subject that students will be ready for at this stage across the sciences, mathematics, arts, social sciences, and humanities. Experiential learning within each subject, and explorations of relations among different subjects, will be encouraged and emphasized despite the introduction of more specialized subjects and subject teachers" (NEP 2020, 4.2, p.11)

In addition to digital literacy and vocational training, the policy emphasizes the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, and communication skills. Instead than just passively absorbing knowledge, students are urged to actively engage in learning activities. The policy encourages relating what is learned in the classroom to real-world situations, which makes learning more applicable and significant (Athavale & Bansal, 2021). In order to gain new perspectives and expand their comprehension, students are urged to think back on their experiences. NEP 2020 highlights the value of cooperative learning settings where students may cooperate, exchange ideas, and hone their collaboration abilities (Abdul, 2024). According to the policy, learning experiences should be customized to meet the requirements, interests, and learning preferences of each individual student. In order to support holistic development, NEP 2020 promotes the inclusion of sports and the arts in the curriculum (Barab & Luehmann, 2003). Key competencies and 21st century abilities can be developed through experiential learning. NEP 2020 requires learner-centered, adaptable, and discussion-based educational techniques. The policy encourages the use of technology to improve chances for experiential learning. Students can address local concerns and make contributions to their communities through experiential learning that incorporates community engagement:

"In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects. To close the gap in achievement of learning outcomes, classroom transactions will shift, towards competency-based learning and education. The assessment tools (including assessment "as", "of", and "for" learning) will also be aligned with the learning outcomes, capabilities, and dispositions as specified for each subject of a given class" (NEP 2020, 4.6, p.12).

Benefits of Experiential Learning in NEP 2020

Compared to rote memorizing, experiential learning enables students to actively engage with concepts and complex processes, resulting in a deeper and more enduring comprehension. Students gain the capacity for critical thinking, analysis, and creative problem-solving by taking on real-world issues and difficulties. Students who participate in experiential learning, particularly through project-based learning and vocational training, gain real-world experience and information that is relevant to the industry, increasing their employability (Abbas, 2022). In experiential learning settings, cooperative projects and activities cultivate interpersonal, communication, and teamwork skills, all of which are critical for success in a variety of areas. Students' motivation and interest in their studies are increased when learning is made more fun and engaging through interactive learning, hands-on activities, and real-world applications. Through the development of social, emotional, and physical well-being in addition to cognitive abilities, experiential learning fosters the growth of well-rounded people (Mondal & Mahato, 2025). By encouraging students to view errors as teaching moments, experiential learning helps them develop resilience and a growth attitude. Students develop a greater understanding of the relevance and usefulness of what they are studying when theoretical information is connected to real-world applications. Students who participate in experiential learning get the abilities, know-how, and perspective necessary to adjust to the constantly shifting demands of the twenty-first century (Barab & Luehmann, 2003).

Conclusion

Experience was linked to men's actions and suffering in specific and evolving life circumstances, contributing to the philosophical devaluation. This effect combined with several others to emphasize in higher education all the subjects and approaches that required the least amount of bodily activity and sense-observation. The modern era began with a revolt against this viewpoint, an appeal to experience, and an attack on so-called purely rational concepts on the grounds that they were either merely manifestations of institutionalized class interest and prejudice, or that they needed to be defended by the outcomes of tangible experiences. However, a number of factors caused experience to be viewed as pure cognition, ignoring its inherent active and emotional phases, and to be associated with the passive receiving of discrete sensations. As a result, the new theory's impact on education was limited to eliminating some of the bookishness of earlier approaches rather than achieving a comprehensive restructuring. By emphasizing experiential learning, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 moves the emphasis from rote memorization to skill development and real-world application. This entails learning by doing, with a focus

on experiential learning, education that incorporates the arts and sports, and storytelling. Recognizing the importance of knowledge acquired via experimentation, observation, and experience, the NEP also incorporates Indian Knowledge Systems.

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