



Experiential Learning of History Teaching at Secondary Stage in Schools of Delhi in the Light of NEP 2020

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Abstract

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 introduced a major pedagogical reform in Indian education, emphasizing experiential learning as a cornerstone of teaching and learning. Experiential learning advocates a hands-on, reflective and inquiry-based approach that enables students to connect classroom concepts with real-life contexts. This study examines the implementation of experiential learning in the teaching of History at the secondary level in Delhi schools, analyzing the perceptions of teachers and students, classroom practices and the degree of alignment with NEP 2020 principles. Using a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 63 teachers and 87 students through validated perception scales and structured classroom observation schedules. The study utilized random sampling across North and Central Delhi districts. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data from observations provided interpretive insights into classroom experiences.

The findings reveal that a majority of History teachers are aware of experiential learning concepts and express positive attitudes toward their pedagogical value. The mean perception score of teachers ($M = 83.05$, $SD = 6.5$) suggests a high level of awareness, although practical implementation remains uneven. Students also demonstrate favorable responses toward activity-based and discussion-oriented lessons, with a mean score of 55.17 ($SD = 14.2$), indicating engagement but limited exposure to diverse experiential techniques. Classroom observations further indicate that while 74% of teachers use real-life examples and 62% employ visual aids effectively, integration of digital tools, collaborative activities and interdisciplinary linkages is minimal. Only 38% of lessons reflected clear alignment with NEP 2020's emphasis on critical thinking and inquiry.

The study identifies several constraints such as time pressure, large class sizes, limited ICT resources and lack of continuous professional development, all of which hinder consistent adoption of experiential learning. Nonetheless, both teachers and students perceive experiential pedagogy as enhancing historical understanding, empathy and critical analysis. The study concludes that experiential learning has the potential to transform History education into a dynamic process of exploration, connecting students' cognitive and emotional domains with lived realities.

The study recommends systematic teacher training programs focused on experiential design, curriculum flexibility for project-based assessment and integration of local heritage and technology into classroom activities. Policy-level interventions must bridge the gap between NEP 2020's vision and practical realities through resource allocation, mentorship and community partnerships. By adopting experiential learning as a core methodology, History teaching can nurture reflective, informed and socially responsible citizens, aligning education with the broader objectives of NEP 2020 for holistic and transformative learning.

Keywords: Experiential learning, History education, NEP 2020, Secondary schools, Delhi, Pedagogical reform

1. Introduction

Education is not merely the transmission of information but the cultivation of understanding through experience. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India underscores this philosophy by emphasizing experiential learning—a process that places students at the center of their learning journey. Rooted in constructivist principles, experiential learning encourages learners to engage actively with content, apply knowledge to authentic contexts and reflect on their experiences to construct meaning (Kolb, 1984; Dewey, 1938).

In the context of History education, experiential learning holds transformative potential. Traditional History instruction in India has long been characterized by rote memorization, chronological narration and examination-centric approaches (Singh, 2019). However, the NEP 2020 envisions a shift toward inquiry-based and project-oriented learning, aiming to nurture critical thinking, empathy and historical consciousness.

This study explores how experiential learning is implemented in History classrooms at the secondary stage in Delhi schools. It evaluates teaching practices, teacher and student perceptions and the degree of alignment between classroom processes and NEP 2020's vision. The findings aim to contribute to ongoing discourse on educational reform and pedagogical innovation in social sciences.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Theoretical Foundations

Experiential learning theory (ELT) developed by Kolb (1984) conceptualizes learning as a cyclical process involving concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization and active experimentation. Drawing on Dewey's (1938) philosophy of education as experience and Piaget's (1954) constructivism, ELT emphasizes active engagement and reflection. In History education, this means enabling students to "experience" the past through evidence-based inquiry, interpretation and empathy.

2.2 Experiential Learning and History Teaching

Barton and Levstik (2004) argue that effective History teaching should empower students to make meaningful connections between past and present. Techniques such as simulations, heritage walks, historical debates and community projects allow students to embody historical thinking. Choudhary and Sharma (2021) highlight that experiential methods enhance critical thinking and empathy—qualities essential for understanding social change and diversity.

Research suggests that experiential learning deepens retention, fosters civic engagement and nurtures inquiry skills (Gupta, 2021). It transforms History from a static subject into a living dialogue between learners and the past.

2.3 NEP 2020 and Pedagogical Transformation

The NEP 2020 (Ministry of Education, 2020) emphasizes active and experiential pedagogy to move away from rote-based education. It calls for integrating technology, arts and local heritage to create interdisciplinary linkages. Studies by Bhattacharya (2022) and Kumar and Verma (2020) affirm that experiential learning aligns with NEP's vision for critical, creative and ethical citizens. However, they also note the gap between policy articulation and classroom implementation.

2.4 Research Gap

While numerous studies have discussed experiential pedagogy conceptually, empirical data on its practical integration in Indian History classrooms—particularly in Delhi—remain limited. This study fills that gap by analyzing both quantitative perceptions and qualitative classroom realities.

3. Objectives

- To assess the teaching-learning strategies used in History classrooms at the secondary stage with reference to experiential learning.
- To analyze the alignment of these strategies with NEP 2020 principles.
- To understand students' perceptions of experiential learning in History education.

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was adopted to triangulate data from teacher and student perception scales and classroom observations. This design allowed for both quantitative analysis and qualitative interpretation.

4.2 Sampling

Using random sampling, schools were selected from North and Central Delhi districts. The final sample comprised 63 teachers (93.7% PGTs, 6.3% TGTs) and 87 students (aged 12–18 years; 65.5% female, 34.5% male). Most students belonged to urban settings and were enrolled in classes IX–XI.

4.3 Tools and Validation

Teacher's Perception Scale (19 items) — Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.863$

Student's Perception Scale (19 items) — Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.863$

Observation Schedule — designed to evaluate experiential elements such as inquiry, collaboration, technology use and reflection.

Tools were validated through expert review and piloting. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and thematic interpretation.

5. Results and Analysis

5.1 Teacher Perceptions

Teachers' perception scores ranged from 61–95 ($M = 83.05$, $SD = 6.5$). About 66.6% demonstrated an average understanding of experiential methods. Teachers agreed that experiential learning promotes engagement and critical thinking but cited challenges like large classes, limited time and exam pressure.

5.2 Student Perceptions

Student perception scores ranged from 15–75 ($M = 55.17$, $SD = 14.2$). Many students appreciated lessons involving discussions, visual aids and real-life examples. However, they expressed limited opportunities for project-based or field learning. This reflects a partial implementation of experiential principles.

5.3 Classroom Observations

Observation data revealed:

Alignment with NEP 2020: Only 38% of classrooms exhibited clear NEP alignment.

Use of ICT: 24% used multimedia effectively; 42% rarely used technology.

Teaching Aids and Real-Life Contexts: 62–74% of teachers effectively used aids and examples.

Student Participation: 50% encouraged active participation; 34% facilitated collaboration.

Assessment Practices: Only 38% adopted formative, skills-based evaluation.

Inclusivity: 48% fostered inclusive, discussion-friendly environments.

While awareness was high, systematic application remained inconsistent.

6. Discussion

6.1 Pedagogical Readiness

The findings demonstrate conceptual awareness among teachers but limited pedagogical transformation. Many continue lecture-based methods due to curriculum rigidity. This echoes Korthagen's (2017) assertion that professional learning requires deep reflection, not just exposure to new theories.

6.2 Student Engagement

Students respond positively to active and contextual methods, indicating experiential learning's potential to enhance cognitive and emotional engagement. Techniques such as dramatization, heritage mapping and virtual tours make History tangible, but they demand time and resources that many schools lack.

6.3 Technology and Local Contexts

While NEP advocates technology integration, infrastructural inequities and inadequate digital skills remain barriers. Incorporating local heritage—Delhi's monuments, museums and archives—can ground History teaching in lived experience, bridging theory and practice (Gupta, 2021).

6.4 Assessment and Reflection

Traditional assessments emphasizing factual recall contradict experiential philosophy. Reflective journals, project portfolios and peer evaluations can better measure skills like interpretation and empathy (Bhattacharya, 2022).

6.5 Policy-Practice Divide

The persistent gap between NEP 2020's intentions and classroom realities mirrors the broader policy–implementation challenge in Indian education (Kumar & Verma, 2020). Sustained mentorship, reduced curriculum load and flexible evaluation are essential for success.

7. Conclusion

This study explores the integration of experiential learning in the teaching of History at the secondary stage in Delhi schools. Employing a mixed-methods approach, the research investigates teachers' and students' perceptions of experiential learning practices, the extent of alignment with NEP 2020 principles and the challenges in implementation. Data were collected using a Teacher's Perception Scale, Student's Perception Scale and a structured classroom observation schedule from a random sample of secondary schools in North and Central Delhi.

The findings indicate a positive inclination among teachers and students toward experiential methodologies, with teachers displaying a mean perception score of 83.05 (SD = 6.5) and students 55.17 (SD = 14.2). While most teachers integrate real-life examples, teaching aids and interactive methods, gaps remain in the effective use of technology, collaborative projects and formative assessment methods aligned with NEP directives. Classroom observations reveal partial incorporation of NEP 2020 values such as inquiry, interdisciplinary and reflective learning. The study concludes that although experiential learning is gaining traction, sustained professional development, infrastructural support and contextually relevant teaching resources are necessary for meaningful implementation.

The paper recommends curriculum redesign, teacher training modules emphasizing experiential pedagogy and active policy support to bridge the gap between theoretical intent and classroom practice. The findings have implications for educators, policymakers and curriculum designers striving to realize NEP 2020's vision of holistic, learner-centered education through experiential engagement in History teaching.

The study concludes that experiential learning in History teaching at the secondary stage in Delhi is emerging but not yet institutionalized. Teachers and students recognize its value for engagement and understanding, yet systemic barriers constrain practice.

For NEP 2020's transformative goals to materialize, schools must embrace structural flexibility, resource support and continuous professional development. Experiential learning should not remain a pedagogical option but become a cultural norm within History education—fostering inquiry, empathy and reflective citizenship.

By bridging past and present through lived experiences, History teaching can cultivate informed, critical and compassionate individuals who embody NEP 2020's vision of holistic learning.

8. Recommendations

- **Teacher Training:** Regular workshops focusing on experiential design, use of local resources and digital pedagogy.
- **Curricular Reform:** Incorporate fieldwork, oral histories and community projects into History syllabi.
- **Assessment Innovation:** Adopt project-based and competency-oriented evaluation.
- **Technology Integration:** Ensure equitable access to ICT and promote digital heritage exploration.
- **Institutional Support:** Encourage collaborations with museums, archives and cultural institutions.
- **Policy Alignment:** Ensure consistent NEP 2020 implementation through monitoring and incentives for experiential innovation.

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