

Constructivism and Experiential Learning in National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: A Philosophical Review

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ABSTRACT

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India underscores a revolutionary educational vision, promoting learner-centric, holistic, and competency-based methodologies. This perspective is fundamentally based on the ideas of constructivism and experiential learning, which acknowledge learners as active contributors to knowledge creation rather than passive users. Constructivism emphasizes the significance of past knowledge, social interaction, and critical thinking in learning, whereas experiential learning focuses on reflection on tangible events to enhance creativity, problem-solving, and real-world relevance. This philosophical analysis examines the integration of various paradigms under NEP 2020 to foster significant, contextualized, and lifelong learning. The study examines policy papers, curricular frameworks, and pedagogical practices, revealing the congruence of NEP 2020 with constructivist and experiential philosophies, emphasizing the capacity to foster critical thinking, autonomy, and adaptive competence in learners. The review indicated that the NEP's emphasis on experiential, inquiry-based, and activity-orientated education signifies a paradigm shift toward an educational system that fosters holistic development, active involvement, and lifelong learning. In this article; constructivism and experiential learning in national education policy (NEP) 2020: a philosophical review has been discussed.

Keywords: National Education, Policy, Constructivism, Experiential, Learning.

INTRODUCTION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies a pivotal transformation in the Indian education system, prioritizing holistic, learner-centered methodologies that transcend rote memorization in favor of profound comprehension and practical involvement. This perspective is fundamentally based on the educational theories of constructivism and experiential learning, which assert that information is actively built by learners via significant experiences rather than passively acquired. Constructivism, based on the theories of Piaget, Vygotsky, and Bruner, asserts that learners form cognitive structures by engagement with their environment, social situations, and existing knowledge. Experiential learning, as defined by John Dewey and David Kolb, emphasizes learning as a reflective process based on tangible experiences, active exploration, and critical evaluation. The

NEP 2020 incorporates these concepts by advocating for activity-based, inquiry-driven, and multidisciplinary education, thus enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. This paradigm change links education with 21st-century demands and reflects India's philosophical traditions that emphasize experiential knowledge and lifelong learning. This paper examines constructivism and experiential learning in the context of NEP 2020 to elucidate the philosophical foundations of modern educational reforms and their effects on curriculum design, pedagogy, and learner empowerment (Chopra, R., 2022).

PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF CONSTRUCTIVISM- EXPLORING HOW KNOWLEDGE IS ACTIVELY CONSTRUCTED BY LEARNERS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR NEP 2020

Constructivism is a learning theory based on the premise that information is actively produced by learners through experience, reflection, and social interaction, rather than passively acquired. In contrast to conventional educational approaches that prioritize rote memorization, constructivism perceives learning as a dynamic, student-centered process. Philosophically, it relies on epistemological viewpoints that assert knowledge is subjective, contextual, and formed by the learner's engagement with the environment, rather than being an objective fact imparted by the teacher. Intellectuals such as Jean Piaget, who underscored the stages of cognitive development, and Lev Vygotsky, who accentuated social interaction and the Zone of Proximal Development, established the theoretical underpinnings of constructivist methodologies. Within the constructivist framework, learners engage as active participants rather than passive recipients. Knowledge building transpires when students confront difficulties, interrogate assumptions, and cooperate with others. This closely corresponds with experiential learning, wherein reflecting on tangible experiences fosters a more profound comprehension. The learner's previous knowledge, beliefs, and cultural background influence the process of meaning-making, underscoring the ontological notion that reality is perceived through personal experience. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 endorses these ideals by promoting comprehensive, learner-centric education that fosters critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. The NEP 2020 underscores flexibility, multidisciplinary education, experiential teaching methods, and active knowledge engagement, embodying constructivist principles. The policy promotes project-based learning, collaborative classrooms, and the incorporation of local settings, enabling learners to develop knowledge meaningfully and relate it to real-world applications (Tilak, J.B.G., 2021).

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING- THEORY AND PRACTICE-UNDERSTANDING LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE AND REFLECTION, REFERENCING KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

Experiential learning, as a pedagogical method, prioritizes learning by direct experience coupled with reflective observation, promoting profound comprehension and personal development. At the core of this concept is David A. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which asserts that learning is a cyclical process comprising four essential stages: tangible experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. During the concrete experience phase, learners

immediately interact with a task or circumstance, acquiring firsthand knowledge. This is succeeded by reflective observation, wherein learners meticulously scrutinize and evaluate their experiences, discerning patterns, achievements, and obstacles. In abstract conceptualization, learners integrate their reflections to develop general principles, models, or theories that elucidate their experiences. Ultimately, in active experimentation, learners implement these insights in novel circumstances, evaluating hypotheses and enhancing their comprehension. This cyclical process emphasizes that learning is not solely the intake of information but an integrated interplay of experience, reflection, and application. Experiential learning occurs in several educational contexts, including fieldwork, internships, laboratory experiments, problem-based learning, and simulation exercises, enabling learners to cultivate critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and adaptability. Kolb's paradigm highlights the interplay between experience and reflective thought, emphasizing the fluidity of learning and fostering ongoing personal and professional growth, while also promoting involvement, autonomy, and significant knowledge creation (Mehta, S., 2021).

Experiential learning, viewed via Kolb's cycle, offers a comprehensive framework for comprehending the active construction of knowledge rather than its passive acquisition. The discourse surrounding this methodology underscores that learning is profoundly individualistic and contextually influenced: two persons may share identical actual experiences yet extract disparate insights informed by their reflections and past knowledge. Through reflective observation, learners are prompted to critically assess both outcomes and processes, thus enhancing metacognition and self-awareness. The level of abstract conceptualisation enables learners to transcend isolated experiences by linking them to overarching principles and theories, thus integrating practice with theory. Active experimentation subsequently evaluates these discoveries, fostering adaptability, problem-solving, and the capacity to apply learning to unfamiliar contexts. Experiential learning has demonstrated considerable advantages in academic and professional environments: students in project-based courses, trainees in organisational contexts, and participants in community initiatives frequently report enhanced engagement, motivation, and knowledge retention. Nonetheless, the discourse also underscores challenges, including the necessity for guided and structured reflection, the avoidance of superficial learning, and the acknowledgement that learners differ in their preferred entry points into Kolb's cycle—some excel through experiential learning, while others thrive through observation or conceptualisation. The discussion highlights that experiential learning is a dynamic, iterative process, asserting that genuine learning occurs when experience and reflection are synthesised, and knowledge is consistently applied and evaluated in real-world situations (Kumar, A. & Singh, P., 2021).

INTEGRATION OF CONSTRUCTIVIST PRINCIPLES IN NEP 2020 – HOW NEP EMPHASIZES LEARNER-CENTERED PEDAGOGY, INQUIRY-BASED LEARNING, AND CRITICAL THINKING

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 coincides with constructivist ideas by promoting a transition from rote memorization to learner-centered education, wherein students actively construct knowledge via experience, reflection, and meaningful involvement. The NEP prioritizes inquiry-based learning, promoting learners to pose questions, investigate concepts, and interrelate ideas across disciplines, rather

than merely absorbing knowledge passively. This method fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity, enabling students to autonomously analyze, evaluate, and synthesize knowledge. Through the promotion of collaborative learning, project-based activities, and interdisciplinary curricula, the NEP cultivates a climate in which learners engage actively in producing knowledge, therefore deeply internalizing concepts and acquiring abilities for lifetime learning. The policy promotes instructors as facilitators and mentors, directing students in discovery instead of only imparting knowledge, so guaranteed education is tailored, engaging, and reflective of each learner's context and interest.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 demonstrates a robust commitment to constructivist ideas by advocating a transition from teacher-centered education to learner-centered pedagogy, wherein students actively participate in the construction of their own knowledge. The policy prioritizes inquiry-based learning, urging learners to explore, question, and investigate things instead of depending on rote memorization. This method cultivates critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, allowing pupils to assess information, consider options, and make educated choices. The NEP promotes experiential and collaborative learning, enabling learners to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical applications through projects, conversations, and interdisciplinary activities. Educators are perceived as facilitators and mentors who direct the learning process, fostering students' curiosity and inventiveness. NEP 2020 aims to establish a flexible, engaging, and personalized learning environment by incorporating constructivist concepts, fostering lifelong learning, analytical skills, and holistic development to equip students for success in a complex and dynamic world.

The examination of NEP 2020 indicates that the policy robustly endorses constructivist learning methodologies, highlighting learner autonomy, inquiry, and critical thinking. The policy promotes learner-centered teaching, wherein students assume responsibility for their own learning and interact substantively with the topic. Inquiry-based and experiential learning methodologies are emphasized as essential tactics, enabling students to investigate concepts, pose enquiries, and implement information in practical settings. The policy emphasizes the role of instructors as facilitators and mentors, mentoring pupils instead of merely conveying information. Furthermore, NEP advocates for interdisciplinary and collaborative learning, enhancing creativity, problem-solving, and analytical abilities. The findings demonstrate that NEP 2020 effectively incorporates constructivist ideas, with the objective of fostering independent, reflective, and lifelong learners equipped to address difficult real-world situations (Sharma, G., 2021).

EXPERIENTIAL APPROACHES IN INDIAN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT – APPLICATION OF HANDS-ON, PROJECT-BASED AND ACTIVITY-DRIVEN LEARNING IN SCHOOLS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Experiential learning within the Indian educational framework has progressively emerged as a crucial method to connect theoretical knowledge with actual application, enhancing comprehension and critical thinking among students. Educational institutions are increasingly implementing experiential activities, project-orientated tasks, and engagement-focused learning to actively include students in the educational process. In educational institutions, scientific experiments, artistic endeavours, excursions, and cooperative classroom activities enable students to engage with subjects directly, hence improving recall and problem-solving abilities. In higher education, internships, industry-

related projects, research assignments, and community involvement initiatives allow students to apply academic knowledge in practical settings, fostering professional skills, inventiveness, and leadership capabilities. This transition to experiential methodologies corresponds with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which prioritises skill development, learner-centred pedagogy, and holistic education, thereby creating an environment where students not only gain knowledge but also enhance creativity, critical thinking, and lifelong learning competencies.

The adoption of experiential methods in Indian education presents a significant opportunity for discourse, especially concerning its efficacy, obstacles, and influence on student learning outcomes. Experiential learning, via practical exercises, project-orientated projects, and activity-based modules, converts students from passive users of information into active participants, enhancing engagement, curiosity, and critical thinking. This methodology promotes collaborative learning, creativity, and problem-solving in schools, while in higher education, it connects theoretical knowledge with practical application, equipping students for professional and societal issues. Nonetheless, obstacles such as constrained resources, oversized class numbers, inadequate teacher preparation, and conventional assessment methods may impede its complete efficacy. Notwithstanding these obstacles, research demonstrates that students engaged in experiential learning display enhanced memory rates, superior analytical abilities, and increased desire. Moreover, experiential methodologies correspond with the NEP 2020's focus on comprehensive, skill-centric education, indicating that a persistent and adequately supported incorporation of these techniques can markedly improve the quality and pertinence of education throughout India (Tong, D. T., Loc, N. P., Uyen, B. P. & Cuong, P. H., 2020).

The examination of experiential methodologies within the Indian educational framework uncovers some significant insights. Students engaged in hands-on, project-based, and activity-driven learning exhibit greater levels of engagement, creativity, and critical thinking than their counterparts in typical lecture-based environments. Secondly, experiential learning enhances information retention and practical application skills, enabling learners to correlate theory with real-world experiences. Thirdly, educators indicate that these strategies enhance classroom interaction, collaboration, and student motivation; yet, their implementation frequently relies on sufficient training and resource accessibility. Fourthly, higher education students participating in internships, research projects, and community-based activities cultivate professional competences, enhance problem-solving abilities, and refine leadership skills more effectively. Despite ongoing problems such as physical deficiencies and oversized classrooms, the integration of experiential learning with NEP 2020's emphasis on comprehensive, skill-orientated education suggests a substantial beneficial effect on both primary and tertiary educational results.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION– PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR ADOPTING CONSTRUCTIVIST AND EXPERIENTIAL METHODS IN DIVERSE INDIAN CLASSROOMS

Integrating constructivist and experiential learning approaches in varied Indian classrooms offers substantial opportunity and notable problems. These approaches can enhance critical thinking, creativity, and profound conceptual comprehension, enabling students to relate learning to real-life experiences and cultural contexts. They also endorse inclusive education by accommodating diverse

learning styles and fostering collaborative learning among different groups. Nonetheless, practical obstacles encompass substantial class numbers, constrained resources, and inadequate teacher training in contemporary instructional methods. Socio-economic inequalities, linguistic heterogeneity, and inflexible assessment frameworks further limit adaptability in pedagogical approaches. Addressing these obstacles necessitates focused professional development for educators, the incorporation of culturally pertinent and contextually appropriate resources, supportive policy structures, and a progressive curriculum redesign that harmonizes traditional knowledge with experiential learning, thereby allowing Indian classrooms to fully leverage the advantages of constructivist education. (Kumar, R. & Singh, R., 2022).

The discourse on the implementation of constructivist and experiential methodologies in Indian classrooms centers on reconciling theory with practice while considering local limitations. Constructivist teaching promotes active knowledge construction by students through inquiry, cooperation, and reflection, rather than passive information reception. Experiential learning enhances this by linking classroom instruction to real-world applications, promoting practical skills in conjunction with cognitive development. In India, these methods can convert learning from rote memorization to substantive participation, especially in diverse classrooms characterized by linguistic, cultural, and socio-economic variation. Successful implementation is contingent upon teacher readiness, availability of suitable resources, and supportive institutional frameworks. Educators require training in both educational methodologies and classroom management skills that address diverse learning speeds. Moreover, infrastructure constraints, elevated student-to-teacher ratios, and examination-centric curricula present obstacles to extensive implementation. Notwithstanding these challenges, pilot programmes and innovative educational institutions have shown that contextually pertinent solutions, along with constructivist and experiential approaches, can improve student motivation, critical thinking, and lifelong learning abilities. The discussion emphasizes the necessity for systemic reforms, incremental curriculum redesign, and ongoing professional development to render learner-centered methods feasible throughout the Indian education system.

Research and classroom observations about the implementation of constructivist and experiential learning in various Indian contexts indicate a combination of favorable results and ongoing obstacles. Students exposed to these methods exhibit greater engagement, enhanced critical thinking, and superior retention of topics in comparison to standard rote-based learning. Collaborative projects and practical activities facilitate the reconciliation of cultural and linguistic disparities, promoting peer learning and social competencies. Educators indicate heightened student curiosity and engagement; nonetheless, numerous individuals also convey challenges in overseeing huge classes and incorporating experiential activities within strict curricula and examination schedules. Resource limitations, such as restricted access to instructional aids, technology, and contextually pertinent resources, sometimes hinder comprehensive adoption. Moreover, disparate teacher preparation across regions results in inconsistency and variability in the quality of these strategies. The findings indicated that although constructivist and experiential methodologies can markedly improve learning outcomes, their efficacy in Indian classrooms is contingent upon systematic support, teacher capacity development, and culturally responsive curriculum design. (Uzun, C. & Uygun, K., 2022).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION AND CURRICULUM DESIGN – ROLE OF TEACHERS, CURRICULUM FLEXIBILITY AND PEDAGOGICAL REFORMS UNDER NEP 2020

The NEP 2020 anticipates dramatic reforms in teacher education and curriculum design, highlighting the pivotal role of teachers as facilitators of holistic learning rather than passive conveyors of information. Educators are anticipated to be proficient in child-centered, experiential, and multimodal teaching methods, promoting critical thinking, creativity, and socio-emotional competencies. Curriculum flexibility is fundamental, enabling schools to tailor the curriculum to local circumstances, incorporate vocational and life skills, and foster interdisciplinary learning, thus departing from rote memorization. The pedagogical reforms of NEP 2020 promote technological integration, ongoing evaluation, and collaborative learning methodologies, assuring alignment between teacher training programmes and classroom practices and 21st-century educational objectives. This comprehensive approach places educators as architects of learning experiences, rendering the curriculum adaptable, inclusive, and prepared for the future.

The discourse on the ramifications of NEP 2020 for teacher education and curriculum development underscores multiple interrelated aspects. The policy acknowledges teachers as essential agents of change, highlighting the necessity for ongoing professional development to furnish them with contemporary pedagogical abilities, such as experiential learning, inclusive practices, and ICT integration. Secondly, the emphasis on curriculum flexibility facilitates adaptability to local settings, learner interests, and vocational requirements, thereby departing from inflexible, examination-focused frameworks. Third, educational reforms promote a transition from rote memorization to competency-based learning, enhancing critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Collectively, these components indicate a comprehensive change in which teacher preparation, classroom instruction, and assessment methodologies integrate to establish a holistic, learner-centered educational environment. The discourse highlights challenges including teacher preparedness, infrastructure support, and the reconciliation of national standards with localized curriculum innovations, underscoring that effective implementation necessitates coordinated efforts among policy, institutions, and communities.

Educators are progressively regarded as facilitators of comprehensive, student-centered learning rather than just purveyors of content. Educational institutions possess increased flexibility to tailor curricula to regional needs, incorporate interdisciplinary disciplines, and encompass vocational and life skills. The adoption of immersive, interactive, and technology-enhanced pedagogical methods is increasing, shifting away from rote learning. The focus is on cultivating critical thinking, creativity, socio-emotional competencies, and problem-solving skills in kids. Notwithstanding the policy's objective, deficiencies persist in educator training, infrastructural preparedness, and the equilibrium between standardized criteria and localized curricular modifications. The findings indicated that although NEP 2020 offers a robust framework for the modernization of teacher education and curriculum, successful implementation would rely on teacher readiness, institutional backing, and continuous oversight (Chaudhary R., 2020).

PHILOSOPHICAL ALIGNMENT OF NEP 2020 WITH CONSTRUCTIVISM

The National Education Policy 2020 demonstrates a robust philosophical congruence with constructivist ideas by prioritizing learner-centered education, experiential learning, and the active construction of knowledge. It promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and creativity via transdisciplinary methods, experiential activities, and adaptable curricula, embodying the constructivist perspective that knowledge is collaboratively generated rather than passively acquired. NEP 2020 fosters inquiry-based learning, collaborative projects, and contextual understanding grounded in local culture and environment, positioning learners as active participants in their educational journey and enhancing comprehension and lifetime learning abilities. This alignment highlights a transition from rote memorization to significant, reflective, and adaptive learning experiences that enable students to integrate new knowledge with existing understanding in accordance with constructivist educational philosophy.

The conceptual connection of the National Education Policy 2020 with constructivism initiates a substantial discourse regarding its capacity to enhance learning outcomes in India. NEP 2020, by emphasizing learner autonomy, experiential learning, and critical thinking, contests the conventional teacher-centered model and promotes a more participatory and reflective classroom atmosphere. This method promotes knowledge acquisition via practical contexts, collaborative endeavors, and interdisciplinary education, allowing students to synthesize concepts meaningfully instead of rote memorization. Implementing constructivist approaches on a large-scale pose's problems, including teacher readiness, resource accessibility, and assessment methodologies, necessitating meticulous planning and capacity development. The policy's constructivist orientation indicates a gradual shift towards promoting creativity, problem-solving, and lifelong learning abilities; nonetheless, its success relies on structural support and continuous pedagogical innovation (Aithal, P.S. & Aithal, S., 2020).

The examination of the National Education Policy 2020 uncovers some significant insights pertaining to its constructivist perspective. The NEP 2020 advocates for active, learner-centered education via immersive and inquiry-based learning, multidisciplinary curricula, and project-based activities, allowing students to purposefully generate knowledge. It underscores the incorporation of local settings, culture, and practical applications, hence augmenting engagement and fostering profound comprehension. The policy promotes collaborative learning and critical thinking, enhancing creativity and problem-solving abilities. The findings reveal significant implementation problems, including the necessity for teacher training, infrastructural assistance, and modified evaluation methods to fully achieve constructivist outcomes. NEP 2020 establishes a robust framework for constructivist pedagogy, with the objective of cultivating independent, reflective, and lifelong learners.

CONCLUSION

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 signifies a fundamental transformation in Indian education by adopting learner-centric principles rooted in constructivism and experiential learning. NEP 2020 integrates education with the cognitive and social dimensions of learning by emphasizing

active involvement, critical thinking, and knowledge building through meaningful experiences. Constructivist principles promote the integration of new knowledge with existing understanding, enhancing comprehension and problem-solving abilities, whereas experiential learning connects theory with practice, allowing students to internalize concepts through practical applications. This method signifies a shift from rote memorization to holistic growth, fostering creativity, autonomy, and lifelong learning. The incorporation of these principles in NEP 2020 not only democratizes education but also equips learners to adeptly navigate complex, dynamic contexts, providing them with the competences necessary for the 21st century. NEP 2020 represents a vision in which education is transforming, immersive, and effectively linked with the developmental requirements of each learner.

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