



# Experiential Teaching: A Good Way to Improve Traditional Teaching in Chinese Colleges

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**Abstract.** To cultivate students who will meet the needs of Chinese society, Chinese colleges must improve current traditional teaching and investigate a more disciplinary and effective teaching model that is in accordance with educational laws. Traditional teaching can be improved and solved through experiential learning. Experiential learning focuses on students' ability to build new cognition, apply what they have learned, create new knowledge, gain creativity, solve complex problems, and improve social adaptability and personal competitiveness through practical experiences in created contexts.

**Keywords:** experiential learning · practice · knowledge · skill

## 1 Introduction

Higher education's rational justification for existing, in accordance with Brubaker's philosophical tenets, is the satisfaction of external demands. Additionally, there is an inherent interest dependency between institutions and the market [1]. To develop abilities that satisfy the demands of social progress is one of education's key purposes. The demand for skills will vary as society develops, and education must adapt to meet these new demands. The advantages of conventional education are efficiency and speed because it is predicated on the requirement for economies of scale. In traditional teaching, the knowledge being taught is not applicable to everyday life. Students do not engage in deep learning, they merely receive knowledge messages, and struggle with applying their information.

Today's society has developed new standards and expectations for the development of talent, calling for students to exhibit originality, discernment, and the capacity to solve challenging puzzles. The traditional educational system no longer produces graduates who can meet the demands of societal growth. Colleges, as a crucial setting for talent development, must immediately acknowledge that the current model of talent development is insufficient to meet the needs of society. Instead, they must consider developing a brand-new, superior model. According to recent claims made by the Chinese education sector, the focus of Chinese higher education has shifted from scale development to quality development, from emphasis on overall and average effectiveness to personal thinking development, mental expansion, potential activation, and value discovery.

The new education not only complies with contemporary development needs but also upholds the rules of higher education and personal development. Otten mentions the fact that the concept of experiential education has evolved as a correction of traditional education. Experiential learning, a practice-based teaching method, has the potential to enhance traditional education by addressing its flaws and addressing them [2].

## 2 What is Experiential Teaching?

Human knowledge was initially developed inadvertently by the practice of life and the battle for existence under harsh environmental conditions. Dewey, a well-known educationalist and pragmatist, suggested that “learning is based on experience in real circumstances in the real world,” “learning by doing,” and “education is life.” Famous educationalist Tao Xingchi, a student of Dewey, adopted Dewey’s pragmatism theory and claimed that education for life begins with birth and ends with death. Experiential teaching is “a concept and practice of education in which educators actively place children in direct experience and committed reflection to build knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values,” according to the Association for Experiential Teaching (AEE) [3]. Expert on experiential education David Coble asserts that “learning is the process of creating knowledge through the transformation of experience.” His experiential learning model, which consists of four stages—concrete experience, observational reflection, abstract conceptualization, and subsequent testing of concepts in novel contexts—is an essential component of the development of this theory [4]. In his theory of tacit knowledge, Michael Polanyi makes the case that students prefer to “experience,” “explore,” and “research” on their own. According to Hwang, in order for external resources to truly touch a person’s heart, they must first be felt, seen, and understood [5].

Experiential learning is viewed as a return to the way information is created and transmitted and is heuristic, interactive, self-directed, collaborative, and inquiry-based. Students cross cognitive boundaries and create new information and experiences through experiential learning.

## 3 Traits of Experiential Learning

The experiential learning approach encourages students to view learning as a proactive, creative process in which they create new knowledge, develop their creativity and critical thinking abilities, and learn how to tackle complicated problems in realistic settings. Students are exposed to actual, diverse situations through experiential learning [6]. When confronted with different problems, the student uses what he has learned to try to solve them. Finally, they acquire the ability to solve problems, apply their knowledge, and create new knowledge.

Experiential learning expands the learning environment into a real-world social setting by overcoming the constraints of the setting. Knowledge is expanded in both depth and breadth, increasing its tangible quality. Experiential learning makes teaching and learning equal. Students spontaneously, actively, and autonomously select the learning topics that interest them rather than obediently accepting predefined information and skill training, changing from “I want to learn” to “I want to learn.”

Traditional teaching evaluations focus on results. Emotional experience, motivational orientation, and effort are typically disregarded in traditional teaching evaluation, which is a result-oriented evaluation based on instructional objectives [7]. A process-oriented evaluation system used in experiential teaching suggests the importance of lifetime learning and progress and strongly encourages students to participate actively in their education. Experiential learning boosts students' creativity and capacity for complicated problem-solving, increases their competitiveness in the job, and puts them infinitely closer to the entire society by generating circumstances and offering worthwhile possibilities. According to Mezirow, learning should force people to negotiate and act on our purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others [8]. It is obvious that experiential teaching is more in line with the nature of learning because it improves students' abilities to learn critically and to test what they have learned in practice, as opposed to simply accepting theoretical knowledge from the classroom in its entirety.

## 4 Types of Experiential Learning

The ideal experiential learning environment must be created at the college level, and teachers must be given the knowledge and motivation necessary to administer the entire system of experience learning. Students need to be roused, motivated, and directed by the teachers. Depending on the grade level of the learner, a separate experiential teaching format and curriculum may be developed. The first-year concentrates on the development of values, personality formation, and discernment; the second-year concentrates on the expansion of professional knowledge and the development of team consciousness; the third-year concentrates on the development of professional ability and the development of moral character; and the fourth-year concentrates on career exploration and development.

**Contextualized learning.** It involves setting up a learning environment where emotion and cognition are mutually reinforcing in teaching activities, creating a context that is similar to real-world situations, letting students step into it in a laid-back learning environment, and assisting them in living life, enriching their emotions, using their knowledge, and solving problems in the context [5]. Students grasp the developmental features of items in the simulation, prepare for social life, and then develop creativity, critical thinking skills, and the capacity to handle complicated problems since the produced contexts are infinitely close to the real ones.

**Participate in clubs.** It is impossible to emphasize the value of working as a team, both at business and in life. Through hands-on learning, students who are preparing to enter society need to build a feeling of teamwork and the capacity to function as a team. Through participation in campus community organizations, students are given the opportunity to learn how to recognize and use resources, show initiative, extend and accept assistance from others, take on leadership roles, make decisions, overcome obstacles, and solve problems.

**Social Volunteering.** Colleges must look into more effective strategies to foster students' feeling of proactive social duty and contribution to the community because didactic moral education does not impart genuine responsibility and accountability. Going to

grassroots communities, nursing homes for the elderly, orphanages, and other nonprofit organizations for hands-on experience, understanding how nonprofits operate, and raising awareness of civic responsibility and service are the main goals of public service experience.

**Career interview.** Students select 1–2 workers from comparable businesses based on the occupations they hope to pursue. The preparation for job searching, employment obligations, specific job content, etc., and professional development paths are the main topics of the interviews. Through the interviews, students can gauge the discrepancy between reality and the ideal, validate their compatibility with the desired vocation, and determine the focus of their future efforts.

**Work-related experiential learning.** Students that participate in work-related experiential learning minimize their social adjustment period and improve their competitiveness while also gaining essential skills, building networks, interacting with possible employers, and prioritizing job options. Apprenticeships, part-time jobs, and internships are examples of work-related experiential learning. College graduates who participate in internships may have an early professional advantage over their colleagues who do not [9]. College students can specifically gain effective communication, problem-solving, and collaborative skills through experiential learning.

## 5 Conclusions

Colleges and colleges based on traditional education models can develop abilities that suit social development needs by integrating experiential teaching methods. Experiential learning offers opportunities to comprehend concepts thoroughly, put them into practice, and create new knowledge. In terms of thinking and cognition, experiential teaching breaks down students' mental barriers, expands the scope of their preexisting understanding, and offers fresh perspectives on the world. From a practical standpoint, experiential learning improves students' social skills and fundamental abilities, giving them a significant advantage in the labor market.

**Funding.** The funding of this article is Yunnan University of Finance and Economics 2020 Scientific Research Fund Project (2020B05).

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