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Violeta KAMANTAUSKIENE • Zeynep ALAT • Cristina MESQUITA
Marina TZAKOSTA • Jan Karel VERHEIJ • Tija ZIRINA
(editors)

**A HANDBOOK ON EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION
PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS**

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HANDBOOK CONTENTS

FOREWORD (<i>Violeta Kamantauskiene</i>).....	9
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PART A. GENERAL FRAMEWORK ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

CHAPTER 1. WHAT IS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING?

(<i>Gianina-Ana Massari, Florentina-Manuela Miron</i>)	13
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1.1. GENERAL ASSUMPTIONS AND CONSTRAINTS ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.....	13
1.2. CHARACTERISTICS OF EXPERIENTIAL BASED LEARNING.....	18
1.3. PRINCIPLES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.....	21
1.4. STAGES OF THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE PROCESS	23
1.5. THE ROLE OF THE TEACHER IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.....	24
1.6. THE ROLE OF CHILDREN INTO EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROCESS.....	25
1.7. INTEGRATING EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN TEACHING PROCESS.....	26

CHAPTER 2. OVERVIEW OF CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS ON THE EXPERIENTIAL BASED LEARNING	29
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2.1. INSTRUCTIONAL MODELS FOR THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY (<i>Gianina-Ana Massari</i>)	29
2.2. DEWEY'S FOUNDATIONS FOR THE EXPERIENTIAL BASED LEARNING (<i>Cristina Mesquita</i>).....	36
2.3. IMPLICATIONS OF VYGOTSKY'S IDEAS ON LEARNING PROCESS (<i>Gianina-Ana Massari</i>).....	40
2.4. BRUNER'S CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXPERIENTIAL BASED LEARNING (<i>Cristina Mesquita</i>)	41
2.5. THE JEAN PIAGET'S PERSPECTIVE (<i>Rosa Novo</i>).....	44
2.6. KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY (<i>Gianina-Ana Massari</i>)	46

CHAPTER 3. CITIZENSHIP AND 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION	53
3.1. AN OVERVIEW OF 21 ST CENTURY SKILLS EDUCATION (<i>Jan Karel Verheij, Frank Van Herwaarden</i>)	53
3.2. WHAT KIND OF CITIZENS IS NEEDED IN THE NETHERLANDS IN THE 21 ST CENTURY? (<i>Gerben de Vries</i>).....	60
CHAPTER 4. DIFFERENT APPROACHES OF EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION	75
4.1. THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH (<i>Marina Tzakosta</i>)	75
4.2. THE HIGHSCOPE APPROACH: LEARNING THROUGH ACTION (<i>Cristina Mesquita</i>)	78
4.3. PEDAGOGY IN PARTICIPATION OR MEM (<i>Luis Castanheira, Rosa Novo</i>).....	83
PART B. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH REPORT ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING APPROACHES	
CHAPTER 5. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH REPORT ON EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING APPROACHES (<i>Zeynep Alat, Kazim Alat, Violeta Kamantauskiene, Gianina-Ana MASSARI, Florentina-Manuela Miron, Cristina Mesquita, Marina Tzakosta, Jan Karel Verheij, Tija Zirina</i>)	89
Annex. Teacher Practices Questionnaire.....	126
PART C. EXAMPLES OF EXPERIENTIAL BASED LEARNING DEVELOPED IN DIFFERENT COUNTRIES	
CHAPTER 6. CASE STUDIES ON EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION IN KINDERGARDEN (FOR CHILDREN AGED 3 TO 6)	131
6.1. TEACHING MATHEMATICS IN AN EXPERIENTIAL WAY (<i>Athena Alexopoulou, Eleftheria Beteinaki, Xrysa Derzekou, Moscha Kapsali, Marina Tzakosta</i>)	132
6.2. THREE LITTLE PIGLETS AND A WOLF (<i>Marija Tolpežņikova, Dace Brinka, Daniela Anda Postņņikova, Anete Plūme</i>)	138
6.3. MAGIC SCISSORS (<i>Raimonda Sadauskienė, Asta Kochanskienė, Lina Vaišvidienė</i>).....	141
6.4. VOLCANO (<i>Raimonda Sadauskienė, Asta Kochanskienė, Lina Vaišvidienė</i>).....	144
6.5. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING PROJECT “FRIENDLY VEGETABLES” (<i>Renata Grigelionytė, Edita Martinkėnienė</i>)	148

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4.3. PEDAGOGY IN PARTICIPATION OR MEM

Luis CASTANHEIRA¹, Rosa NOVO²

Perspective of the Modern School Movement

The information that appears systematized in this subchapter comprises two key aspects: the first is a brief contextualization of the Modern School Movement (MSM), and the second concerns the contributions of this pedagogical model for experiential learning.

The MSM, whose origin and development date back to the 1960s, is an association of educational practitioners intended for cooperative self-training of its members and to support in-service training and pedagogical animation of educational institutions. This movement comprises a network of regional groups which act as cooperative working groups for the training and development of educational resources in several areas of formal education. Within its scope a quarterly journal named *Escola Moderna* is edited. It works simultaneously as an informative and dissemination bulletin of pedagogical practices (Nóvoa, Marcelino, & Ramos do Ó, 2012).

Sérgio Niza, the founding member of the Movement in Portugal, states that "(...) when you shape the profession you are shaping

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the pedagogy because they are no two separate things (...) There is a kind of movement, of dialectic, of dialogue between the construction of the profession and pedagogy (...) it is a dialogue with the contexts of practical life and of the constructed knowledge" (1998, cited by González, 2002, p. 111). From this quote one can easily infer that the author defends the 'pedagogical isomorphism' perceived as a methodological strategy which consists of experiencing through the entire educational process. These experiences include attitudes, methods and procedures, technical resources and organizational structures that are intended to be performed in the effective professional practices of teachers. It is through this interaction dynamics, communication and shared reflection on the practices in all degrees of education that everyone understands their professional path. As a result, the Movement itself advances in the construction and reconstruction of its pedagogy (Nóvoa, Marcelino, & Ramos do Ó, 2012). Thus, it can be said that what substantially distinguishes the pedagogy of the MSM is the progressive way that it negotiates, establishes, manages and evaluates the life of the group or class with the children themselves. This refers also to the space, the time, the learning contents and social relations (Grave-Resendes; & Soares, 2002; Folque, 2012). In this perspective, the experiential learning embodies a social and centered interaction that structures the communication, the cooperation, and the negotiation between adult and child and children among themselves. In fact, the Movement's purposes in this aspect are based on: (i) the communication circuits; (ii) educational cooperation structures; and (iii) "on direct democratic participation". All of these sustain both the way they organize the work in the classroom regarding time and space, as well as the learning pathways supported by several piloting instruments that help to regulate what happens in the classroom and which are viewed as a memory of the life of the group. In this way, experiential learning is founded and develops within a democratic organization through three strategic guidelines. One guideline is the transition from personal experience to the *à posteriori* didactics, i.e. it is essential to have the children's previous experiences as a starting point to make sense of new constructions. This means to assume that access to new knowledge is built according to the starting point of each individual, but in a multitude of processes within the classroom group he/she it belongs to.

Another guideline is the need to strengthen the awareness of the production processes, since they are essential to their understanding (from the production to the understanding). The focus on reflecting upon the action provides awareness from the child about its experience, helping him/her to evolve into more advanced levels of understanding.

Finally, intervention also appears as crucial, since its validity will only have meaning if it is socially communicated (from speech to communication). So, experiential learning is not only an individual construction, since it is systematically extended to the entire group where children are encouraged to communicate. When the child explains before the others and the adult what he/she did and how it was done, the child does not only gain consciousness of the action, but also realizes how things proceeded in terms of advances and drawbacks. This allows for a better perspective and new ways to do better or to go further in exploring his/her ideas when challenged by the comments made by peers and by the adult. The focus on experiential learning enhanced by a public scrutiny in the group shows that more than instructing oneself, it is first of all a way to reflect, to be able to tell about it and to conceptualize it. This means that experiential learning gains from complex processes of negotiation of meaning, through organizational strategies and communication circuits.

It is important to stress that this pedagogical model requires a professional learning that shows that the trainee progressively needs to assume himself as a promoter of the participated organization, as a facilitator of cooperation, as a civic and moral animator and also as an active auditor (Niza, 2013).

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