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Marina TZAKOSTA • Jan Karel VERHEIJ • Tija ZIRINA  
(editors)

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

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In this sense, the author reveals that intentionality precedes ability, noting that the deliberate intent on the use of objects will gradually show the child's autonomy.

Learning, as an act of motivation and discovery, should have the purpose of going beyond the transmission and repetition. Only the attitude of reflecting on the actions developed by oneself allows discovering the solutions. According to Bruner (1998, 2000), learning is only meaningful when built by oneself, which implies discovering. The author considered that there are two important experiential based learning strategies that help children to discover, to reflect, to collaborate and to contact with culture: play and the narrative.

### **Play and the narrative as means to make sense of experience**

Play provides an excellent opportunity to test the combination of behaviors that would never be tried under pressure. Repeated opportunities to play allow children to develop their observation skills and the ability to reflect upon actions.

Moreover, playing is connected with the symbolism that children give to materials, creating and adapting them to new situations. Accordingly, the symbolic processing of playing has consequences on the child's learning, serving as a vehicle for contact with social conventions. The narrative, as a mean of oral speech, describe facts in real or imagined sequences that conveys the meaning.

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## 2.6. THE JEAN PIAGET'S PERSPECTIVE

Rosa NOVO<sup>1</sup>

This sub-chapter presents the Piagetian constructivist interpretation and the aim is to expand the understanding of experiential learning

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beyond the stages of development, since it is the most widely-publicized theme of Jean Piaget's work.

In the field of the development of intelligence, an idea seems to stand out in the legacy of this author – the idea of operation. The knowledge is not a copy of reality, because it is always a reciprocal action between the child and the object through the double game of assimilation and accommodation: the child acts on objects by transforming them according to the action schemes and the operations on these schemes available to him/her. In turn, the child imposes them modifications based on the variations of the objects in order to incorporate them. In this process, the balancing mechanism – considered by Piaget as fundamental – is decisive to the adjustment of the child to new information and to the needs of adaptation to the environment.

To know is thus to modify, to transform the object, to understand the process of this transformation and, consequently, to understand the way the object is constructed. An operation is then the essence of knowledge. It is an internalized action that modifies the object of knowledge.

Therefore, it is understandable when Piaget (1970, p. 68) states: "although the child's activity in certain levels entails the manipulation of objects and even a certain amount of physical contact", the operations "are not derived from the handled objects, but from the child's (mental) actions and the coordination of these actions." In other words, experiential learning is not the passive reproduction of what the teacher shows or does what he has planned, but of progressive action and construction involving creation through the pursuit of the problems and issues that children face.

These ideas become clear in the light of the distinction made by Piaget between learning in the strict sense and learning in a broad sense. In the strict sense it is an acquisition that is made in terms of the experience that takes place in time, i.e., mediate and non-immediate (Piaget, 1974, p. 53). Learning, in a broad sense, is "the union of the learnings in the strict sense and the balancing processes" (Piaget, 1974, p. 54), that is, the processes resulting from an internal organization that enables new knowledge.

Thus, for Piaget, the concept of learning is much more comprehensive than the meaning with which it is normally used because it does not end in the strict sense of mediate experience, but, along with the balancing process, assumes the dimension of the cognitive structure development itself, which means intellectual growth.

And according to the form of the experience held by the child, learning can focus the physical and the logical-mathematical knowledge

or the social knowledge. In the first case, the child's initiative is emphasized, his/her actions on objects and their comments about the feedback of the objects. In the second case, the knowledge that the child acquires through experience is derived not from the objects, but from the coordination of actions that the child exerts on objects and the awareness of this coordination. These two experiences are interrelated; one is the reason for the emergence of the other. In the case of the social knowledge there are similar procedures, since it requires the coordination of views to regulate their actions in mutual benefit.

So, we can say that the experiential learning involves tasks that include not only an operational component (child - object interaction), but also a communicative component (child - other children interaction).

However, it is highlighted that the child's interest is necessary to play a regulatory function in the experiential learning. Without interest, the child will never make the constructive effort of understanding the experience.

Starting from Piaget's thought, the teacher must focus on a dynamic in the classroom capable of allowing the collaboration and cooperation of exchanges of points of view, in the pursuit of knowledge and moral growth. This must be based on the organization of the educational environment and the style of adult-child interaction capable of promoting autonomy.

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## 2.7. KOLB'S EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY

Gianina-Ana MASSARI<sup>1</sup>

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