



EXPEDUCOM

A HANDBOOK ON EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION.

PEDAGOGICAL GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS

Erasmus+ Project:

Experiential Education Competence
(teaching children aged 3-12) – EXPEDUCOM

The grant reference number:
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Editors:

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FOREWORD

Violeta KAMANTAUSKIENE

Experience-based education is the method or way of teaching through doing, namely it is the process during which young learners obtain knowledge and skills via personal experience. Individuals are involved in a particular activity which they reflect, analyze and that brings higher level of awareness and/or changes in behavior

World tendencies require to educate young learners so that they were creative, flexible, able to analyze, think critically.

It is common sense that the most predominant tendency in education is to educate young learners so that they become creative, flexible, able to analyze, critical thinkers, independent and democratic citizens.

EXPEDUCOM is a project risen from the needs to meet the requirements of the modern world via developing and implementing innovative educational practices related to experience-based pedagogical approach addressed to children aged 3-12.

The project outcomes target at strengthening the professional profile of in-service educators as well as students - future teachers by developing pedagogical guidelines on experiential education, open educational tools-real life cases, offering training for improvement of professional and communicative skills, improving curricula of pre-school, primary and teacher training institutions.

This handbook rose from the needs to meet the requirements of the modern world via developing and implementing innovative educational practices related to experience-based pedagogical approach educating children aged 3-12.

This handbook constitutes an approach for investigating the theoretical and practical training strategies from the perspective of experiential education. The purpose of this paper aims to provide theoretical and practical tools useful in early education specialists and primary education by developing practical strategies component, to support the development of educational activities and research to adapt permanently instructive approach to the specific demands of contemporary society. Due to changes at multiple curricular authors develop paradigms for training future teachers and introduce the need for activity planning, implementation and evaluation of training through experiential learning activities, thereby contributing directly to improving interactive teaching strategies.

Given the above, this handbook is organized as follows:

Part A. General framework on experiential learning

What is experiential learning? (Concept; Characteristics of experiential based learning; The principals of experiential orientation; Experiential based learning stages; Teacher roles; Children roles; Integration of experiential learning in teaching); Overview of conceptual foundations on the experiential based learning (Instructional models for the experiential learning theory; Dewey's foundations for the experiential based learning; Implications of Vygotsky's ideas on learning process; Bruner's conceptual contribution to the experiential based learning; The Jean Piaget's perspective; Kolb's experiential learning theory); Citizenship and 21st century education (An overview of 21st century skills education; What kind of citizens are needed in the Netherlands in the 21st century?); Different approaches of experiential education (Reggio Emilia Approach; High Scope Approach; Pedagogy in Participation or MEM)

Part B. International research report on experiential learning approaches

Part C. Examples of experiential based learning developed in different countries structured as case studies on experiential education in kindergarden and case studies on experiential education in primary school.

This handbook aims to provide the necessary and adequate information regarding experiential learning and teaching and is directed to parents, students and educators of preschool and primary school children. More specifically, the outcomes of the project directly address teachers working in kindergartens and primary schools; students of pre-school and primary education; teacher trainers, researchers at universities providing pre-school and/or primary education; parents or anybody interested in education of children aged 3-12.

PART A.

**GENERAL FRAMEWORK ON
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING**

2.4. BRUNER'S CONCEPTUAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE EXPERIENTIAL BASED LEARNING

CRISTINA MESQUITA

Instituto Politécnico de Bragança

The pedagogical conceptualization of Bruner (2000) emphasizes the idea that children's development should take place in an enabling environment where both the agency and the self initiated work are promoted.

For Bruner (2000), self initiation means to allow children to control what they want to do. It means that school should promote an enabling culture that encourages them to participate in their learning process, to be proactive, to learn in community and collaboratively, creating social or natural meanings about the world.

Learning environments

Valuing the environment and the culture, Bruner developed the idea of the folk pedagogy. He was concerned about how the children's minds work, but mainly with how children learn and what allows them to develop. The folk pedagogy values the common interaction, while activity helps children to see the world but also the constitutional role of culture in the construction of meanings (Bruner 2000).

According to Bruner (2000) the environment has a key role in the learning process. Action learning takes place through the manipulation of objects, not as mere imitative handling or breeding, but as action intentionally conducted by individual purpose. For him "the mind is an extension of the hands and of the tools we use" (p.198). The space where children learn should be an opportunity to act, think and communicate. It should be configured as a starting point that allows developing an effective sense of participation in an enabling community. However, the learning space is not conceived by the author merely as physical. The enabling action depends on the existence of a social context. For Bruner (1997) the artifacts lead children to different actions and because they are steeped in culture, they constitute a way of cultural appropriation. The author believes that thinking involves learning how to use cultural, symbolic and material tools considering the specificities of its use (Bruner, 1998).

The materials are conceived as opportunities for action and interaction that facilitate play. Regarding this, play allows to learn in

situation, to think about the action, as well as the construction of social functioning rules.

The activity of manipulation of objects through games favors dialogue and the construction of a narrative action.

This perspective emphasizes that the organization of time should favor the action of the child with the materials, experiencing their chances and the dialogue about their achievements. In this sense, every moment of the day should be a learning opportunity. The actions of adults developed during the daily routine should structure the spontaneous activity of the child (Smidt, 2011).

The ideas of Bruner (2000) about the importance of adult as a scaffold in the construction of children's meanings, highlight the importance of the dynamic of the daily routine that should be deeply interactive, conversational and reflective. The educational environment is conceived by Bruner (2000) from the sociocultural constructivist perspective that values the child's action in a cultural context, noting that there is an active interaction between reality and the subject in the construction of knowledge, feelings and emotions.

Children's Interactions with adults and with peers

The importance given by Bruner (1998, 2000) to the experience and culture, leads him to emphasize that learning is not a passive act, not merely individual. The author asserts that learning is a construction "of ourselves as agents animated by self-generated intentions" (Bruner, 2000, p. 35) within communities, through exchange and negotiation that create a culture of participation. An important role of education is to help children to build a self-consciousness that necessarily involves the recognition of the other as an himself.

Children are viewed as thinking beings who build and share the meanings, through interactions with others and with the engagement with culture. This view highlights the important role of collaboration and dialogue that educators should promote with the children during the educational process. The interaction between the educator and the child must be a dialogic transaction to allow the child to complexify his thinking and make meaning of the world around him (Bruner, 1998).

However, he emphasizes that the support that the educator gives the child, should never replace the construction of meaning by himself.

The educator is a scaffold that helps children construct meaning through collaboration and negotiation (Bruner, 2000, p.86).

Children as active and competent learner

From the perspective of Bruner (1997, 1998, 2000) the child is competent to perform intentional actions. He also states that learning is a complex process that will expand as the subject structure the meanings of the world. In this sense, the author considers that the activities should take into account four fundamental aspects: action, reflection, collaboration and culture.

Children can define their actions in order to achieve satisfaction, which makes them assumption makers. From this meaning, Bruner conceived the concept of *child's agency* (Smidt, 2011). Bruner (1984) refers that the activity contrasts with the mere movement. The activity requires conducting and regulating the movement to achieve some specific goal.

To regulate the intentional action, it is necessary to have the opportunity to compare what we try to do with what we do in fact, using this difference as a correction factor.

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 allows 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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