



## Applying Experiential Learning Theory to Learning Activities to Increase Learning Motivation

Salwa Putri Azzahra<sup>1</sup>, Chelsea Elfa Alip Suryadi<sup>1</sup>, Lenggogeni Dewi Bulqis<sup>1</sup>, Tri Umrotul Nabayanti<sup>1</sup>, Bunga Priska Al-Adawiyah<sup>1</sup>, Suciana Wijirahayu<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA, Indonesia

<sup>2</sup>The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA, Indonesia

### Corresponding Author:

Name: Salwa Putri Azzahra, Suciana Wijirahayu

Email: (salwaputriazzahra661@gmail.com) (sucianawijirahayu@uhamka.ac.id)

### Author

Salwa Putri Azzahra (salwaputriazzahra661@gmail.com)

Chelsea Elfa Alip Suryadi (chelseayunda0@gmail.com)

Lenggogeni Dewi Bulqis (geni.bulqis105@gmail.com)

Tri Umrotul Nabayanti (triumrotulnabayanti@gmail.com)

Bunga Priska Al-Adawiyah (bungapriska05@gmail.com)

Suciana Wijirahayu (sucianawijirahayu@uhamka.ac.id)

### Abstract

Many schools use very boring learning methods, thus inhibiting students from developing skills and thinking. Experiential learning aims to make classes more interactive and reflective. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to clarify and identify ways to implement experiential learning methods in each school to prevent student boredom during the learning process. This study explores the application of experiential learning in educational settings based on David A. Kolb's theory, which includes four stages: real experience, reflection, abstract concepts, and active experimentation. This research was conducted through a literature review and previous research. The results show that this method can increase student engagement and deepen student understanding of the material., train critical and creative thinking skills, and support collaboration. This model can be applied at all levels of education, although challenges remain, particularly related to resource availability. Experiential learning, divided into four phases, can enhance student engagement, understanding, critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration. While challenges remain, particularly related to resource availability, this model can be implemented at all levels of education.

**Keywords:** Experiential learning, Student engagement, Learning theory, Learning motivation, Critical thinking



## **Introduction**

In education, teaching methods play a key role in improving the quality of teaching and learning [1]. However, many schools still use conventional methods, which can be boring and discourage active student engagement. This results in low student interest and reduced critical and creative thinking skills. Therefore, a more interactive and reflective teaching approach is needed to fully engage students in the learning process and develop essential skills. How is experiential learning theory applied in educational practice?

Experiential learning theory, developed by David A. Kolb (1984), emphasizes that learning is a process that occurs through direct experience, where students actively engage in various activities, reflect on them, and connect those experiences with concepts or theories to create new understanding. There are several applications of experiential learning theory in educational practice: 1. Require students to actively engage in hands-on experiences. 2. Reflection is key to transforming experience into knowledge. 3. Interpreting theory with practice, making learning more meaningful and contextual. 4. Helping students develop critical, collaborative, and adaptive thinking. Experiential learning, or experiential learning, is a beneficial educational model in the field of education because it teaches through experiential learning, which uses creative, experiential, and hands-on activities as a means of presenting subject matter [2].

Within this framework, teachers, students, and the educational environment are the three key elements of education. Academic initiatives must be engaging, relevant to students' daily lives, and develop 21st century skills to overcome these barriers. Experience-Based Education, conceptualized by David A. Kolb, is a topic worth considering. Creativity and practical experience play a crucial role in children's development, enabling them to think constructively and combine existing concepts with entirely new ideas [3].

Experimentation, meanwhile, plays a crucial role in advancing students' approaches, enabling them to deepen their understanding of the material taught by teachers [4]. Combining practice-based learning with innovation contributes significantly to students' positive motivation, enabling them to face the future with courage and skill. Learning through direct experience can be used to help students become more courageous in trying and not be afraid of failure, as it is possible that great potential lies within students that have not been tapped for future success. This can also strengthen students' self-confidence, because this learning framework is implemented in a way that is enjoyable for them. Children can participate in a variety of activities, such as exploring, identifying, realizing, and connecting. By providing opportunities for children to learn through concrete, real-life experiences, they will become more active and actively involved in the learning process, which in turn will accelerate their understanding and mastery of the material surrounding the environment they are studying [5]

This study aims to examine the application of the hands-on learning framework, a method that involves engaging with the surrounding world and using practical experiences to foster intelligence in young learners. By implementing a robust conceptual framework and comprehensive strategies, this research is expected to yield substantial improvements in early childhood education. At the same time, this study is also designed to determine how well this teaching strategy can inspire children to collaborate, generate new concepts, and articulate their thoughts successfully [6].

Therefore, utilizing experiential learning is an appropriate approach to creating a lively, enjoyable, and meaningful educational environment [7] Through students' direct participation in the educational journey [8], this technique not only enriches their understanding of the material but also fosters analytical reasoning skills, inventive thinking, and self-confidence. Furthermore, the cooperative partnership between educators and students in hands-on learning can strengthen positive classroom exchanges and foster a continued desire to acquire knowledge [9].



## **Material and Methods**

### *Material*

This study uses a qualitative approach with scientific learning methods to gain an in-depth understanding of the experiential learning model in fostering student creativity [10]. This strategy was chosen because it allows for in-depth explanations of student learning activities through direct experiences and interactions between teachers, students, and the learning environment. The research participants were students at specific educational levels (e.g., elementary, middle, or high school—depending on the research context), while the focus of the study was the application of the experiential learning model in teaching and learning activities [11].

Currently, in Indonesia, many educators use engaging teaching techniques, one of which is the use of song-based learning. This technique is designed to increase learning effectiveness, prevent monotony, and enhance enjoyment by integrating lesson material into song lyrics, making it easier for students to remember and understand. This approach is most often used in early childhood and elementary schools because it creates a fun and stimulating learning environment [12].

### *Methods*

Through this method, we will explore the concepts, principles, and best practices of experiential learning and its impact on the creativity of early childhood or student learners [13]. Thus, this approach is expected to yield a comprehensive understanding of how the application of learning models can stimulate children's imagination and innovation, as well as provide recommendations for educators in implementing effective strategies in the learning environment.

Data collection techniques were carried out using several methods, namely: 1. Observation, to directly observe the process of implementing experiential learning in the classroom. 2. Interviews, to obtain information from teachers and students regarding their experiences and responses to this method. 3. Documentation, to collect supporting data such as lesson plans (RPP), student work results, and photographs of learning activities [14].

The data obtained was then analyzed descriptively using the following stages: (1) summarizing the data, (2) displaying the information, where researchers presented information obtained in the field in the form of narratives, tables, graphs, and other formats related to improving speaking skills through the singing method, and (3) researchers drawing conclusions. Through this analysis, it can be seen how the application of experiential learning influences the increase in students' creativity, participation, and selfconfidence in the learning process [15].

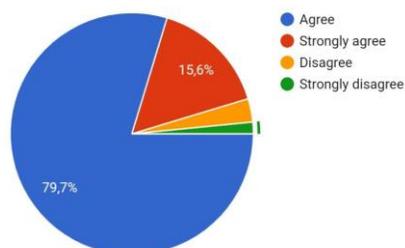
## **Results and Discussion**

This survey was conducted to determine the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with the Analytical Study of Experiential Learning. There were 64 respondents who answered the survey. Among them, more than 70% of survey questions showed a positive response pattern, indicating approval of Experiential Learning as a method for education in the digital age. The application of experiential learning theory to learning activities, such as practical simulations and group reflection, was shown to increase student motivation, with 75% agree, but also 22% strongly agree, 2% disagree, and 1% strongly disagree, based on an intrinsic motivation survey conducted before and after the intervention. The results of the study showed that learning activities that integrate the experiential learning cycle—namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation—significantly increase students' learning motivation.

This study confirmed that the application of experiential learning theory to interactive learning activities, such as collaborative projects and field experiments, was effective in increasing learning motivation, especially

among students who were previously less motivated by traditional methods. Longitudinal data analysis shows that the application of this theory not only increases short-term learning motivation but also builds students' reflection and independence skills, which contribute to more lasting intrinsic motivation.

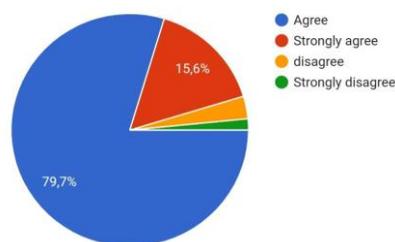
## Results



**Figure 1.** Applying Kolb's learning cycle in group projects encourages collaboration, which increases social motivation and makes learning more enjoyable.

Survey results about Fig 1. Applying Kolb's learning cycle in group projects encourages collaboration, which increases social motivation and makes learning more enjoyable. Shows a response of 79,7% of respondents agree, 15,6% of respondents strongly agree, 3,1% of respondents disagree and 1,5% strongly disagree.

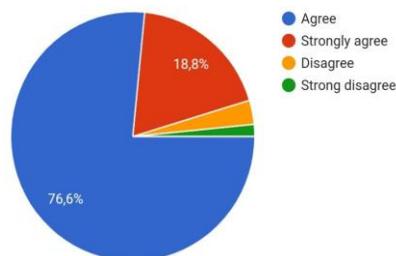
The results of this study indicate that the application of the experiential learning theory, developed by David Kolb (1984), emphasizes that effective learning occurs through a cycle of direct experience, reflection, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, increasing students' learning motivation. which is in line with the principles of the Kolb cycle, which emphasizes direct experience as the basis for active learning [16].



**Figure 2.** Experiential activities such as play scenarios help learners connect theory with practice, sparking curiosity and sustained interest in the subject

Survey results about Fig 2. Experiential activities such as play scenarios help learners connect theory with practice, sparking curiosity and sustained interest in the subject. Shows a response of 79,7% of respondents agree, 15,6% of respondents strongly agree, 3,1% of respondents disagree and 1,5% strongly disagree.

In the context of learning activities, the application of this theory can significantly increase student motivation by changing the learning process from a passive approach to an interactive and relevant one to real life. For example, instead of just listening to lectures on ecology, students can engage in field projects such as environmental surveys or ecosystem simulations, where they experience firsthand challenges, reflect on the results, and apply new knowledge [17].

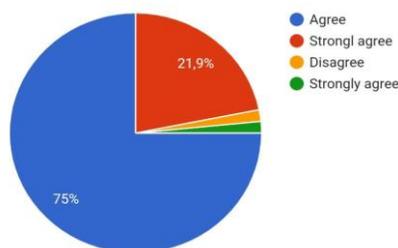


**Figure 3.** Integrating feedback cycles into experiential learning allows students to see their progress, strengthening motivation through a sense of accomplishment.

Survey results about Fig 3. Integrating feedback cycles into experiential learning allows students to see their progress, strengthening motivation through a sense of accomplishment. Shows a response of 76,6% of respondents agree, 18,8% of respondents strongly agree, 3,1% of respondents disagree and 1,5% strongly disagree.

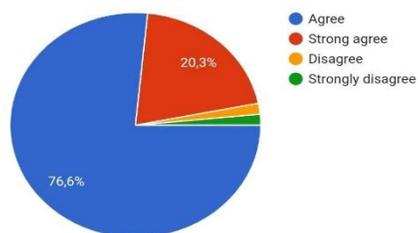
This not only deepens understanding but also builds a sense of achievement and intrinsic engagement, which in turn encourages intrinsic motivation compared to passive learning methods, although results vary depending on the cultural context and age of the students. However, a key challenge is ensuring these activities are well-structured so as not to be too free-flowing, allowing students with low motivation to remain engaged [18].

**Figure 4.** Outdoor experiential learning, such as environmental Studies, leverages students' natural curiosity about



the world, increasing motivation beyond the traditional classroom.

Survey results about Fig 4. Outdoor experiential learning, such as environmental Studies, leverages students' natural curiosity about the world, increasing motivation beyond the traditional classroom. Shows a response of 75% of respondents agree, 21,9% of respondents strongly agree, 1,5% of respondents disagree and 1,5% strongly disagree. Overall, integrating this theory into the curriculum can create a more dynamic learning environment, where motivation is increased through meaningful and personalized experiences [19].



**Figure 5.** The use of technology in experiential settings, such as virtual reality simulations, provides immersive experiences that captivate students and increase engagement.

Survey results about Fig 5. The use of technology in experiential settings, such as virtual reality simulations, provides immersive experiences that captivate students and increase engagement. Shows a response of 76.6% of respondents agree, 20.3% of respondents strongly agree, 1.5% of respondents disagree and 1.5% strongly disagree.

Practically, applying this theory in the school curriculum can help educators design more engaging activities, such as hands-on experience-based projects, to address the problem of low motivation in the digital age, thereby increasing student engagement and long-term learning outcomes [20].

Despite the promising results, this study still has limitations, such as the small sample size and focus on one type of learning activity, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to broader educational contexts or student populations with different backgrounds. It is hoped that there will be further research, which is suggested to explore the application of experiential theory in online learning not only offline learning, such as distance learning, as well as measuring its impact on long-term motivation through more comprehensive longitudinal studies to strengthen empirical evidence.

## Conclusion

The application of experiential learning theory in learning activities is an effective strategy to increase learning motivation. By integrating practical experience and reflection, educators can create a more dynamic and meaningful learning environment, ultimately supporting the development of more competent and motivated students. Recommendations for further implementation include teacher training and periodic evaluation to ensure appropriateness to student needs.

The experiential learning model plays a crucial role in developing creativity in early childhood. With an approach focused on direct experience, children are given the opportunity to learn through active interaction with their environment, allowing them to explore new ideas and innovate without fear of making mistakes. Through various activities involving play, simulations, and experiments, children can develop not only cognitive skills but also social and emotional skills.

The application of this model not only stimulates children's imagination but also encourages collaboration, communication, and problem-solving. Thus, this learning strategy is expected to contribute significantly to the development of children's creativity, which is fundamental to their readiness to face future challenges.

This research demonstrates that integrating experiential learning into early childhood education can make learning experiences enjoyable and effective, thus supporting children's holistic development. Overall, experiential learning methods are a powerful tool for increasing motivation in education. By emphasizing hands-on experience, reflection, and practical application, this approach transforms learning from a passive activity into an engaging and meaningful process.



In an increasingly complex world, where student motivation often declines due to overly theoretical learning, experiential learning offers an innovative solution. By consistently applying Kolb's cycle, educators can create a more dynamic learning environment, where students not only learn but are also motivated to continue growing. Ultimately, investing in this approach is not just about increasing individual motivation, but also about developing a generation better prepared to face real-world challenges, thus contributing to broader social and economic progress. This conclusion confirms that experiential learning is not a passing trend, but rather the foundation for effective and highly motivated education in the future.

### Acknowledgments

The authors would like to express their deepest gratitude to University Muhammadiyah Prof. DR. HAMKA or the support and supportive academic environment so that this research can be completed successfully. This research was conducted as part of preparations for the International Conference on Healthcare Safety and Health Education (InSight 2025), and the authors are grateful for the opportunity to present and discuss their findings in this meaningful academic forum.

The authors would also like to express their sincere gratitude to Dr. Ir. Suciana Wijirahayu, M.Pd., for her time, support, and encouragement. Furthermore, her valuable guidance, suggestions, and encouragement throughout the research and writing process played a crucial role in enhancing the structure, clarity, and overall academic quality of this paper. Furthermore, the author would like to express his gratitude to all lecturers, supervisors, and conference committee for their constructive input and valuable recommendations that have contributed significantly to improving the overall quality of this research.

### References

1. Rahmi W. Analytical study of experiential learning: Experiential learning theory in learning activities. *EDUKASIA Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*. 2024 Oct 22;5(2):115-26. <https://doi.org/10.62775/edukasia.v5i2.1113>
2. Pratiwi A. Konstruksi tes gaya belajar berdasarkan teori belajar eksperiensial david a. kolb. *Interaktif*. 2010;1(1):243302. <https://media.neliti.com/media/publications/243302-none-7e9327b1.pdf>
3. Fania M, Iriani T, Arthur R. Improving vocational student competencies through industrial class-based experiential learning. *Jurnal Pensil: Pendidikan Teknik Sipil*. 2024 Jan 31;13(1):120-9. <https://doi.org/10.21009/jpensil.v13i1.38151>
4. Joronalona R, Rohaeti E, Laksono EW, Notiavina AA. Immersive and Experiential Learning: A Review of Project-based Learning and Virtual Reality in Chemistry Education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Matematika dan Sains*. 2025 Jun 28;13(2):311-20. <https://doi.org/10.21831/jpms.v13i2.85704>
5. Fitrianto I, Saif A. The role of virtual reality in enhancing Experiential Learning: a comparative study of traditional and immersive learning environments. *International Journal of Post Axial: Futuristic Teaching and Learning*. 2024 Jun 27:97-110. <https://journal.amorfati.id/index.php/postaxial>
6. Uzun C, Uygun K. The effect of simulation-based experiential learning applications on problem solving skills in social studies education. *International Journal of Contemporary Educational Research*. 2022 Mar;9(1):28-38 <https://doi.org/10.33200/ijcer.913068>
7. Ti LK, Chen FG, Tan GM, Tan WT, Tan JM, Shen L, Goy RW. Experiential learning improves the learning and retention of endotracheal intubation. *Medical education*. 2009 Jul;43(7):654-60. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2923.2009.03399.x>
8. Fanning RM, Gaba DM. The role of debriefing in simulation-based learning. *Simulation in healthcare*. 2007 Jul 1;2(2):115-25. <https://doi.org/10.1097/SIH.0b013e3180315539>



9. Laverie DA, Hass A, Mitchell C. Experiential learning: A study of simulations as a pedagogical tool. *Marketing Education Review*. 2022 Jan 2;32(1):3-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2020.1843360>
10. Brennan R. Reflecting on experiential learning in marketing education. *The Marketing Review*. 2014 Apr 28;14(1):97-108. <http://www.westburn.co.uk>
11. Kappers WM, Cutler SL. Simulation to application. The use of computer simulations to improve real-world application of learning. *Computers in Education Journal*. 2016;7(1):64. <https://commons.erau.edu/publication/334>
12. Kushinikov J. Building a Foundation for Cross Cultural Trust and Friendship through Experiential Learning and Coaching. *Developments in Business Simulation and Experiential Learning*. 2025 Mar 4;52. <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we>
13. Baker MA, Robinson JS. The effects of an experiential approach to learning on student motivation. *Journal of Agricultural Education*. 2017;58(3):150-67. <https://doi.org/10.5032/jae.2017.03150>
14. Hsiao SC. Effects of the application of virtual reality to experiential education on self-efficacy and learning motivation of social workers. *Frontiers in Psychology*. 2021 Oct 27;12:770481. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.770481>
15. Fortunela BS, Subekti H, Sabtiawan WB. Application of experiential learning model to increase students motivation and learning outcomes. *Jurnal Pijar Mipa*. 2022 Jul 24;17(4):430-6. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jpm.v17i4.3601>
16. Depiyahani I, Azra F. Development of android-based learning media applications on mole concept topics for high school students. *Jurnal Pijar Mipa*. 2023 Mar 30;18(2):194-200. <https://doi.org/10.29303/jpm.v18i2.4725>
17. Rukhsana B, Naeemullah M, Rehman S. Effect of Experiential Learning on Students' Motivation and Interest at Elementary Level in the Subject of General Science. *International Research Journal of Education and Innovation*. 2021 Sep 20;2(2):41-53. [https://doi.org/10.53575/irjei.9-v2.2\(21\)84-96](https://doi.org/10.53575/irjei.9-v2.2(21)84-96)
18. Urquidi-Martín AC, Tamarit-Aznar C, Sánchez-García J. Determinants of the effectiveness of using renewable resource management-based simulations in the development of critical thinking: An application of the experiential learning theory. *Sustainability*. 2019 Oct 2;11(19):5469. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11195469>
19. Rahman, Z., Rijanto, T., Basuki, I., & Sumbawati, M. S. (2020). The Implementation of Blended Learning Model on Motivation and Students' Learning Achievement. *International Journal for Educational and Vocational Studies*, 2(9). <https://doi.org/10.29103/ijevs.v2i9.2694>
20. Holtzman R. Experiential learning in Washington, DC: A study of student motivations and expectations. *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching and Learning Journa*. 2011. [https://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/histss\\_jou](https://digitalcommons.bryant.edu/histss_jou)