

Learning by Doing - Case of Catalytic Pedagogy

Poornima Narayan R. and Anjali A.

SCMS Cochin School of Business

ABSTRACT

All life is learning and learning is lifelong. The 21st century has mandated a global shift towards inquiry, creativity, critical thinking, and leadership skills. Experiential learning triggers the development of these qualities by transforming the learner from passive to active. Days of classroom learning are a thing of the past. The concepts explained in the class have to be experienced as this enhances metacognition, the key to an efficient learner. Managerial concepts are better understood when students experience the business environment in tandem with the consumers. The current Indian teaching-learning system lacks field exposure, reflecting their professional preparedness. The teaching-learning strategy should be aligned towards building student competencies and creating a learning-practicing environment. This paper focuses on how understanding and practicing the concepts become more efficient when students internalize the crux and pulse of the concepts through real-life interactions. Even while we understand this connection, studies prove this needs to be improved. The study identifies an interdisciplinary area where field exposure contributed to student development. This being a trial, serves as effective proof of the innovative teaching methodology 'learning by doing'. The tested methodology has to be sanctioned and adopted by the system for it to deliver efficient results from a wider perspective.

Keywords: Learning by doing, experiential learning, Metacognition, Kirana stores, Economics

INTRODUCTION

The student aspirations and the dream chase fuelled by the changing global scenario have put Indian management education through a significant transition. Management education is a perpetually dynamic, ever-evolving science. It has to keep up with the scenarios, technological changes, and changes in market conditions. The core competencies of schools offering management education lie in unique and innovative pedagogy, to enable meaningful learning and development of skill sets that the employers think are ideal for their employees. (Nawaz and Gomes, 2014) The pedagogical style and approach should be so fashioned to meet the needs of the management job requirements.

This places the primary onus of imparting knowledge on the faculty. The syllabus developed is drafted to meet the changing patterns of the learning process, focus, and aspirational goals. This calls for a shift from the conservative methods of teaching. Teaching-learning is now a wider canvas of providing an environment conducive to creative blending from the classroom sessions with the tasks on the work front.

Dewey (1998) argues that traditional education with

set schedules, rules and procedures follows a 'pattern of organization' that inhibits student learning. Educators act as agents through which knowledge and skills from the past are passed on and rules of conduct are enforced. The current generation of millennials is used to a natural lifestyle that is in tandem with digitalisation. These students are keen on getting involved in activities that make them feel involved, help them in self-development, and are dynamic and creative (Iftode, 2019).

Millennials and Generation Z students are more technologically advanced and self-directed than the previous generations. These students are comfortable learning online, using videos, rather than reading from books. To engage this student generation, educators need to design sessions and assessments that kindle their critical thinking skills. Even though they are digital literates, they lack the foresight and skill to make use of the umpteen information available in a proper way that would help them to develop professionally. Educators should facilitate the students with a learning environment that helps them think strategically and grow (Mosca et al., 2019).

The case highlights the teaching-learning experience of students in the first trimester of the Post Graduate Diploma in Management. The students were exposed to a 'learning by doing' assessment experimentally which is simultaneously subject to an interdisciplinary situation. The experiment was done in teaching the course 'Economics for Managers', which focuses on basic Microeconomics.

"Is Economics boring or interesting?", "Is Economics Required for a Manager?", "Will we clear the paper?", "Is Economics connected to other subjects?"; students think when the Economics faculty enter the class. The first challenge of the faculty is to answer these queries and ensure that students are receptive to the session. The next challenge to the faculty is how to engage the curious minds in the right way so that students remain interested. Making the students understand and appreciate that Economics is a multifaceted task.

The challenge is to make the course learner-centric. According to Bass (2012), course structures should be designed in a manner that faculty will be empowered to approach teaching in a systematic way that will help them reach the desired instructional goals. With this model in mind, an Economics faculty of a reputed business school decided to design the course "Economics for Managers" for postgraduate management students. To ensure that the course should be conceived well by students, the faculty did a lot of research.

The term that caught attention was 'metacognition', which involves the learner reflecting and analysing thoughts and drawing conclusions from that analysis, and putting the new ideas into practice. For this to happen, learners need to understand how they remember, learn and solve problems. This form of creating a teaching-learning environment results in producing thoughtful and reflective students who are ready to engage in independent lifelong learning (Beach et al., 2020).

This gave the faculty to think about creating a course that would kindle the students to reflect and learn and create a teaching environment. The faculty got into a dilemma at this point. A general idea of the course is not enough to start designing the course together. Faculty need to have answers to which topics to be included, the best teaching strategies for this course, and the audience (Alkathiri, 2021). The designing of the course started with planning the course module, session-wise. The session-wise plan was prepared considering the teaching approach. This refinement

helped the faculty to draft the course objectives and learning outcomes.

The course objectives (CO) defined by the faculty for the course were:

1. CO1: To introduce the students to the discipline of Managerial Economics.
2. CO2: To enable the students to analyze the central decision problems managers face and help them build a strong base in economics to guide these decisions.
3. CO3: To develop an economic perspective among students who aspire to manage business units.

The learning outcomes of the course were:

1. Understand the basic idea of microeconomics
2. Enable them to analyze how the economic thought process should work while managing small business units
3. To develop an idea of how economic decisions are made while considering consumer behavior, production, and markets.

The faculty used to wonder how metacognition matters in education. However, some reading about this taught the faculty that this is something that leads to self-assessment and eventually to self-correction and improvement. An appropriate pedagogy can lead the students to metacognition. The usual exercise in designing the course plan is to first set the course outcomes, develop a list of core textbooks, incorporate assessment descriptions, and evaluation rubrics, and give formative and summative assessment details. With a will to make the course better than that of the previous batch and make it more effective (every year the syllabus and assessments are upgraded), the faculty decided to send the students for a field-based assessment which will introduce them to the economic concept of markets, marketing techniques and also the concept of store management.

The objective of the assessment was to prove the advantage of the experiential learning technique and the methodology adopted was the case study method. The faculty was convinced that through the interdisciplinary assessment and learning-by-doing method, the student can develop a wider perspective of the subject and also experience the working of the theories that they had discussed in the classroom.

THE EXPERIENTIAL PROJECT

The Kirana store project was designed to introduce the students to the second course objective. This exercise was meant to give the students a basic idea about the challenges faced by the owners in managing the store. The students were asked to focus on a product- soap, detergent, etc. This was a group project and each group was asked to do an audit of a pair of stores- a Kirana store (Indian name for the local grocery store) and a Modern Trade Outlet (MTO) and make a comparison on the following aspects.

Project details

- Step 1: Visit a Kirana store and a Modern Trade outlet (MTO) in the same locality.
- Step 1: Choose any product (Eg: Soap/ Detergent etc.)
- Step 2: Compare the chosen Kirana store with the chosen MTO for that product.

Few more points:

Aspects to compare need not be limited to, but should essentially include the following:

1. Physical characteristics of the store
2. Customer Profiling
3. Merchandise Planning
4. Product assortment decisions
5. Retail Pricing mechanism
6. Vendor management
7. Retail communication mix

Nature of assessment:

Each group must

1. Prepare a minimum 3-page case study comparing these two retail outlets from the various perspectives
2. Pick 3 aspects in the case that can be assessed from a microeconomic perspective

Assessment Pattern:

1. 15 out of the total of 70 marks earmarked for internal assessment were kept for the Kirana store project. The assessment was mapped to the CO3 of the course.

2. The assessment mark distribution of the 15 marks for the project is given below:

Content to context application- 5 marks
Structure in which context is presented logically- 4 marks
Presentation style- 3 marks
Team Cohesion- 3 marks.

The project was divided into various tasks:

- 1) First task- Students were to develop a story on their experience and submit it (as shown in Exhibit 1). The reflection of their experience was shared in the class individually.
- 2) Second task- Students did a formal presentation on the learnings (as shown in Exhibit 2) they had from the observations, interactions, and analysed the pairs of stores on the seven points listed above.

This assessment not only gave them life experience but also provided opportunities for students to visit rural and urban areas. Students were given the choice of visiting the Kirana store in the local vicinity of their stay. As the student diversity was from the different parts of the State of Kerala, India, there was a good mix of reflections from rural and urban Kirana stores.

During the presentation, the students understood that the rural area experiment experience was entirely different from the urban one. The mix of demand, that of products needed, the kind of competition, and inventory management were different for rural and urban areas. This exposure gave students a basic idea about the concept of demand, cost-benefit analysis as something completely arithmetic-free, and a faculty possessed by every thinking human being. This also introduced them to basic ideas of marketing and store management.

The andragogy that was tried out gave the students moments of self-reflection vis-a-vis their learnings of 'Economics' was concerned. They got an idea about the market structure, 'monopolistic competition'. The kind of idle participation and monotony that are associated with assignment submission could be converted into the enthusiastic involvement of students. The Course Outcome attainment of the assessment was on the higher end (81.78) (as seen in Exhibit 3) which reflects that 'Learning by doing' made the students think critically about metacognitive development.

Exhibit 1

Reflections of the one day Kirana store experience

K. E. STORES

Mr. Nadirsha, the owner of K E Stores is on a hustle every single day to open his store and also help his father in the store at Paravur Kavala, Kerala. His father has been running the store for the past 55 years, Mr. Nadirsha with the help of his brother-in-law, Mr. Shamsudhin decided to continue his father's legacy, and it's been 20 years they are running K.E.Stores.

The store opens at 7 am every morning. Today I reached the store to witness the day's activity. While opening the shutter of the shop, the person

delivering milk arrived with that day's stock. They have known each other for years and they share a friendly conversation. That day, they were talking about the price increase of items in the Aluva Market, Kerala.

The next customer, a couple enjoying their retirement life, had come to the shop to get milk after their morning stroll. This is a usual routine for many in the area. By 8 AM, the vegetables and fruits from the wholesale market had arrived. The employee of the store also arrived by that time and started shifting the items from the auto and arranging them. Apart from this, many local farmers started ringing in their produce. In between all this, customers started pouring in to buy various items during the working.

Exhibit 2

Powerpoint presentation displayed in the class



Exhibit 3

CO attainment of the class

Subject Name & Code: Economics for Management
3 Credit/EFM

CO report at node: Assessment-4

Class Strength	45
No of student mapped to at least one CO	45
Course Outcomes addressed	CO3
No of students with CO value greater than or equal to	45
Percentage of students with CO value greater than 60	100
Average	81.78
Attainment Level	3

REFERENCES

- Alkathiri, M. S. (2021). Course Design for Teaching Development: Key Considerations for Faculty Developers. *International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change*, 15(3), 13-29.
- Bass, R. (2012, March 21). *Disrupting Ourselves: The Problem of Learning in Higher Education*. 47(2), 27-28. Retrieved December 2022, 2022, from Educause Review: <https://er.educause.edu/articles/2012/3/disrupting-ourselves-the-problem-of-learning-in-higher-education>
- Beach, P. T., Anderson, R. C., Jacovidis, J. N., & Chadwick, K. L. (2020, August). *Making The Abstract Explicit: The Role Of Metacognition In Teaching And Learning*. Retrieved December 23, 2022, from International Baccalaureate: <https://www.ibo.org/globalassets/new-structure/research/pdfs/metacognition-policy-paper.pdf>
- Iftode, D. (2019, March). Generation Z and Learning Styles. *SEA - Practical Application of Science*, 7(21), 255-259.
- Kappa Delta Pi. (1998). *Experience and Education: The 60th Anniversary Edition*. West Lafayette, Indiana.
- Mosca, J. B., Curtis, K. P., & Savoth, P. G. (2019). 66 Journal of Business Diversity Vol. 19(3) 2019 New Approaches to Learning for Generation Z. *Journal of Business Diversity*, 19(3), 66-74.
- Nawaz, D. M., & Gomes, D. M. (2014). An Effective Teaching Pedagogy in Changing Business Education. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(19), 8-15.

