National Research Journal of Social Sciences
Volume-10, Issue-2, July-December 2025
PP: 159-162
ISSN: 2348-473X
Peer Reviewed & Refereed Journal (IF: 6.74)
Journal Website: www.nrjss.in

BEYOND PEDAGOGY- THE ROLE OF EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING IN THE REPRODUCTION OF MITIGATION OF EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines key imperatives of experimental learning in mitigating educational inequality. In India, disparity in education is emerging as a discernible threat to Economic development. The Indian Education landscape is highly uneven and the rural urban divide is very much noticeable. Factors such as insufficient infrastructure, linguistic exclusion, geographical differences , lack of literacy awareness, gender inequality, caste discrimination etc add collectively to this disparity. Besides, social discrimination and cultural barriers hinder achievement of complete pedagogic development. Numerous governmental programmes have been developed to reduce the gap between various socio economic categories in accessing education , but the educational landscape reflects inequality and disproportion. Recent researches in education have revealed that Experimental Learning is a key instrument towards bringing sustainability and equality in educational field. This is a pedagogical shift which is recognized across the globe as a tool to mitigate educational inequality. The EL is experimented to have profound impact on shaping the learners mindset in a positive way irrespective of their socio cultural backgrounds. There is a pressing need for curricular evolution which encourages experimental learning. Socio cultural and environmental challenges manifest in diverse regional landscapes of India need to be prioritised through adoption of inclusive curriculum and experimental learning. Strategies like equitable resource allocation for educational sector ,arranging for teacher training , funding on providing digital access , creation of gender sensitization , structuring of inclusive curriculum , and transparency in providing proper educational reservations will support in mitigating educational inequality.

Keywords: educational inequality, experimental learning, challenges, initiatives

INTRODUCTION:

According to recent data released by **Ministry of Education** 1.17 million students are out of school in 2024-25 . The **Unified District Information For School Education Plus** (UDISE +) , 2021-2022 data shows that the dropout rate is highest at the secondary level with 12.6 percent, followed by upper Primary with 3 % and primary level with 1.% percent. **All Indian Survey on Higher Education (AISHE)** report revealed that the female literacy is very less at 69.4 % while compared to male literacy of 84.7% . According to **OXFAM Data Report** of 2020 the richest 10 percent of the Indians control 74 % of the Nation's wealth. This disparity between rich and poor has played a huge role in inequalities in educational landscape. Children from rural areas and socially disadvantaged groups do not receive fair chances or an equal number of opportunities in the present educational system to succeed.

Government schools in India lack basic amenities including adequate classroom space, clean drinking water , access to hygienic bath rooms , and sufficient lighting support. These factors collectively contribute to inequality in accessing educational opportunities. Education disparity has been further augmented due to unequal allocation of opportunities based on class caste and creed. The diverse

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characteristic of each social group and potential ideological differences poses greater challenge in educational development across India.

Regulations directing educational development- Numerous governmental programmes have been developed throughout to reduce the gap between various socio economic categories Indian Constitution , **Article 21(A) of the** India constitution has made right to free and compulsory education. Article 46 Of The **Right To Education Act** Of 2009 and National Education Policy of 2020 call for inclusive and equitable access to quality education. **Parakh - Rastriya Sarvekshana** 2024 revealed persistent learning gaps remain among SC ST and OBC students. **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan** program provides universal access to primary education focuses in improving schools access enrolment and retention by providing infrastructure teacher training and other support.

Despite achieving universal enrolment in primary education, India faces persistent challenge in ensuring positive learning outcomes and strengthening learners' learning outcomes. **UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report** of 2024-25 revealed that 73 percent of the children were unable to read write and understand a simple text lesson even at the age of 10 which clearly indicates that there is a learning gap between schooling and learning. **World Economic Forum** report revealed that India came down to 129 th position out of 146 countries in gender gap rankings there by impacting education sector negatively.

EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING

Experimental Learning is the process of learning by doing. It means by engaging students with hands on experience in the classroom. Experimental Learning is also referred to as learning through action, learning by doing, learning through experience and learning through self discovery and self exploration. Students in experimental learning situations lend a hand with each other, learn from one another and involve in deep learning.

Benefits of Experimental Learning - Experimental Learning as a set of chosen experiences supported by reflection of critical analysis and synthesis has several benefits.

1. **Academic initiative**- In Experimental Learning, experiences are structured to require the learner to take initiative, make decisions and be accountable for final results. In a curriculum supported Experimental Learning environment a learner gets personal attention and guidance through the master is his learning process. A learner becomes motivated to make proper learning decisions paving way for best academic results.
2. **Fight against Disparities** -Experimental Learning allows learners to pose questions, investigate and self experiment. Educational research have show that self investigation and self experiment are best tools for proper learning. Unless and until a learner discovers to make attempts to improve his scholastic skills , inclusive learning environment will not flourish. Experimental Learning allows a learner to learn by posing short and connective questions . This inquisitiveness leads him to score in academics and sets right his cognitive skills. The disparities of culture , social status , linguistic complexity, etc will disappear when learner makes his mind to learn by self experiment.
3. **Academic responsibility**-Experimental Learning motivates them to be curious, ready to solve problems there by assuming academic responsibility. This allows learners to be always creative and constructive. These qualities ensure positive thinking and enhance learner's cognitive skills.

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4. **Psycho support** -In Experimental Learning, all learners are engaged emotionally, physically, socially and psychologically. As studies have revealed dropout rates of children in higher secondary level is appalling . Majority of the student drop out of school because of socio economic issue s. But , their lack of attention inside the classroom also is a serious issue which causes their repeated absence from school eventually leading to leaving school education. A leaner's learning attentiveness can be garnered through inclusion of Experimental Learning activities .
5. **Academic accuracy**- Experimental Learning will assist learners to connect theoretical aspects of the lessons more accurately. Studies have shown that children in primary secondary levels find arithmetic very difficult. If they are provided with Experimental Learning resources , they can learn easily.

Thus, Experimental Learning motivates learners to perform better in academics. The lessons taught in school becomes life lessons and learner remembers his learning throughout his life.

EXPERIMENTAL LEARNING AS A STRATEGY TO MITIGATE EDUCATIONAL INEQUALITY

The goal of education is to establish a just and accommodating learning environment where all learners regardless of their socio economic setbacks have access to equal chances of study. Education always acknowledges that every learner needs varying degrees of academic support to reach their full potential. The very essence of education is that learners have a variety of social cultural backgrounds and many encounter multifaceted difficulties in learning. But they can perform better if they learn through experimental learning.

Languages in education training and access to livelihoods have received very less attention by educators. This negligence has adversely affected the overall growth of education. Even though there is a brighter reflection of economic development , the economic implications of language , the management of multi linguist theories in the economic sphere and its implications on nation's economic growth has not yet received equal attention. The linguistic disparities and emergence of multi lingual culture is another great impediment in educational access and socio economic mobility. Hence the strategists for Experimental Learning need to focus on these short comings.

Experimental Learning can support learners from SC/ST and other OBC categories , who suffer socio – cultural discrimination and become de motivated in pursuing education. Experimental Learning prepares these vulnerable sections to move up in socio economic ladder. Experimental Learning supports learners to solve academic problems and life lessons by motivating them to assume responsibility in an experimental learning environment . Experimental Learning allows each learner to be creative and practical. These qualities ensure positive thinking and enhance learner's cognitive skills which add to learner's academic performances.

The inclusion of Experimental Learning at all levels of education will help learner's to experience the teaching minutely and makes them to be attentive in classrooms. The learner's potential learning lacuna will be confronted through Experimental Learning when the learner learns to through hands on experiences. It is obvious that when learning become playful activity dropout rates will come down , cognitive skills will improve and literacy rate scales up and inequality will gradually will fade away.

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CONCLUSION-

As India envisions holistic and child centric education through National Education Policy 2020, there is a need for prioritising structural changes in curriculum . The need to include experimental learning becomes inevitable as India is emerging as a global force. The Indian education sector is experimenting with good schemes and plans to overcome impediments , but the policy makers need to take the participatory support of alls take holders in bringing experimental learning in school curriculum.

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