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The Importance of Experiential Activities for Students: A case of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

Experiential learning is a process that begins with practice, experimentation, and then the learner analyzes and reflects on the experience and the results of that experience. This process helps students consolidate knowledge, form and develop new competencies, skills, behaviors, and even new ways of thinking. This approach is considered to have many advantages compared to the traditional educational method. This research is completed based on analysis and assessment from survey activities and understanding the study habits of students, and the teaching methods of elementary, middle and high school teachers in Ho Chi Minh City. Through research, some schools in the city are still teaching and learning by traditional methods, the experiential activities alternating with classroom lessons are still rather new. Most of the students feel quite boring and monotonous when every day when they come to class, they listen to lectures, copy lessons, return lessons without any experiential activities. The inclusion of practical activities in the above lessons is very necessary to change the atmosphere in the classroom as well as help students to absorb knowledge in an intuitive and vivid way. And this research shows the benefits of practical experiences for learning and teaching in schools today. Methods of face-to-face interviews and questionnaires were used and then analyzed using a five-point Likert scale. The research results confirm the role of experiential teaching and clarify the question of how to help improve the quality of teaching in today's smart and modern society.

Keywords: benefits, experience, learning, student, teaching

INTRODUCTION

Everyone understands that the capacity for each person to enter life is not only limited to the requirement of memorizing and accumulating knowledge, but also to in-depth analysis and creative application in work and for a better life (Nguyen, 2021). Currently, experiential activities are gradually gaining attention, according to the general education program (published in July 2017), and the general education program of subjects (issued according to Circular No. 32/ 2018/TT-BGDĐT dated December 26, 2018), in addition to the content of basic subjects, primary school classes also have the content "Practice and experience activities". Not only primary school students in general, students in Ho Chi Minh City in particular also need to have experiential activities to promote creativity and absorb lectures quickly. Today's world is constantly moving and changing and now employers always appreciate candidates with good soft skills, workers can easily join online classes or training courses, conferences to discuss and develop necessary skills to meet the requirements of the job. Skills such as adaptability, teamwork skills are always considered the top important skills, as criteria for employers to evaluate and select employees. Those skills greatly help in student decision making (Wu, 2020). And those skills can be conveyed to students by the school through practical experience sessions. From there, students can grasp concepts more easily, have more opportunities to promote creativity and can find more effective approaches and problem-solving methods (Diep, 2015).

Therefore, this article aims to outline the benefits that experiential activities bring to help readers have a realistic and objective view, from which they can design appropriate and effective teaching methods.

RESEARCH CONTENT

Literature Review

During the twentieth century to the present, educators such as Lev Vygotsky, Jean Piaget, Kurt Lewin, John Dewey, David A. Kolb and many other educators have been interested in the study of an education. progressive (education must be based on the experience of learners) as opposed to traditional education (education is training

from outside; imparting content including knowledge, skills, standards and code of conduct that has been developed in the past for the next generation) (Healey & Jenkins, 2000). In that progressive education, the value of freedom is promoted, learning through self-experience, learning must be associated with the benefits of life, learning is to adapt to the ever-changing life environment (Kim & Lyons, 2003). Central to the research on progressive education is the “Experiential learning theory” to describe the learning process from the learner's experience, notably Kolb's research on experiential learning theory was published in 1984. Experiential learning theory has been becoming a trend, the foundation of education in the 21st century (Hanh, 2017).

Education activities after 2015 need to fully grasp the spirit and goals of Resolution No. 29-NQ/TW on fundamental and comprehensive renovation of education and training, that is, it is necessary to organize educational activities in the direction of: enhance the experience, in order to promote creativity for students, create different environments for students to experience the most, and at the same time be the source of creativity, turning creative ideas of students for them to show their full creative potential (Young et al., 2008). Talking about creative experience means that students have to go through reality, participate in or come into contact with certain things or events and create new values in terms of material or spiritual, find new things, the new solution is not constrained, depending on the existing one (Diep, 2015).

Actual situation of application of experiential activities in teaching

In the United States, right from preschool to general education, students are always encouraged to express their personal views in any matter, encouraging self-reflection, self-mastery, and self-improvement, the ability to think independently, communicate and be creative. The basic teaching method in the US is to guide and stimulate interest, thereby motivating students to actively explore, discover and conclude their own lessons. Through extracurricular activities, teachers will also discover the qualities of each student, thereby orienting to focus on developing that quality (Estes, 2004).

In Japan, because the script is kanji, it is difficult to learn for young children, so Japan prioritizes not teaching children how to write from kindergarten to 3rd grade, but only teaches them to be aware and practice like nature. get dressed, carry a briefcase, thank you, apologize, how to greet, be polite to adults, how to get along with friends and love animals, playtime is the main thing, the teacher does not interfere but just stands remotely observe and support when needed, stimulating curiosity, creativity and eagerness to learn (Kim & Lyons, 2003).

Until 3rd grade, Japanese students began to have tests, giving priority to teaching practice more than theory. For example, when teaching students about farming, the school allows students to go to the fields and instruct them to grow rice and vegetables so that students can acquire practical knowledge and appreciate the food and labor of the farmers (山田、2018). At the undergraduate and graduate levels, students are always able to absorb the new, the latest and useful scientific technologies and practice at school and practice in many places.

Korea places more emphasis on primary school education with a mandatory six-year period to create a solid foundation of knowledge as well as moral and discipline training for elementary school students before entering high school. Korean students have great academic pressure due to the periodic quality tests and the heavy amount of knowledge in class (Kim & Lyons, 2003). This helps Korean students have a high sense of self-discipline in studying, have a good environment for them to rise up and progress towards the bigger goal of becoming students of prestigious universities.

Currently, our country's educational method has been innovated, learning from developed countries in the world, which is an active teaching method, alternating experiences. That is, teaching and learning without organizing student learning activities, focusing on training students' self-study methods, enhancing individual learning in combination with cooperative learning, combining teacher assessment, and self-assessment of the game.

The educational method of our country is no longer one-way lecture and transmission, but instead it is inquiry, discovery, problem solving, interactive teaching, question and answer, group activities, role-playing, etc. brainstorm, etc.

Currently, in Ho Chi Minh City, schools still apply the traditional teaching method, which is a teacher-centered teaching method. Teachers will be the ones who directly teach and interpret knowledge to students and students will listen, take notes and memorize those knowledge (Wehbi, 2011). This teaching method has been conducted for a long time and still brings positive effects. However, when teaching using traditional teaching methods, there will also be disadvantages such as students will absorb knowledge in a passive way, class time will take place in boredom and in favor of theoretical knowledge. Students will have little opportunity to practice, actively explore, so it is difficult to remember for a long time and apply it in practice (Kim & Lyons, 2003).

METHODS, SUBJECTS, SCOPE OF RESEARCH

This research article focuses on the benefits of experiential activities for students in Ho Chi Minh City area. This article is completed based on the main methods of document analysis and survey. Focusing mainly on research works, journals, treatises, books of Vietnam and other countries related to the research problem, thereby analyzing, synthesizing and building a theoretical basis for the research. Some methods can be mentioned such as document analysis method to analyze available documents from relevant sources; Sociological investigation method was

carried out within schools in the area about the learning situation and teaching methods. From there, conduct research on the advantages, disadvantages as well as the experiences that the students of the top schools in Ho Chi Minh City have about learning methods and acquiring knowledge. Finally, the evaluation, analysis, synthesis of search results, surveys and application of theory are mentioned. In addition to the article with the most objective research results, opinion surveys as well as direct interviews have been conducted and have obtained positive results.

RESEARCH RESULTS

In order to bring out the benefits of putting practical, experiential and teaching and learning activities in the most objective way, a number of survey questions combined with interviews were carried out for the students. born at some schools in Ho Chi Minh City and gave the following results.

Table 1: Students' interest in experience and practice

Questions	Responses		
	How do you feel about learning theory in class?	Funny, receptive	Normal
	3	20	4
Does the teacher allow the class to practice after the theory lessons?	Yes	No	X
	25	2	
If yes, how often is the experience activity?	Seldom	Sometimes	Frequently
	11	12	4

According to the above table, it can be seen that the number of students who can absorb theoretical lectures in class positively and happily is only 3/26 students, equivalent to 11.1%. The number of students who feel that the theoretical lesson in class is boring, difficult to absorb, easily causes a lack of learning motivation is 4/26 students, respectively 14.8%. The answer with the largest number of students was 20/26 students who felt "Normal" with class lessons, accounting for 74.1% of the total number of students participating in the survey (Table 1).

In addition, when asked about the frequency of practice sessions and experiences in the learning process, the number of students "rarely" participating in practical activities and experiences accounted for a large number of 11/26 students. , equivalent to 42.3%.

Table 2: The frequency of experiential activities

Questions	Responses		
	Do you feel the experience and practice sessions are necessary?	Yes	No
	23	4	
When taking experiential lessons, how will you absorb knowledge?	It's easier to remember and remember longer by applying theory into practice	It's still the same as learning theory in class	It's dull and tiring
	17	5	5
In your opinion, what do you learn from the experiential learning sessions that help your life?	Stimulate brainstorming, can be applied not only in class, but also in other problems in life	Developing teamwork skills	Expanding knowledge that is not available in class from experience sessions
	12	10	5
How do experiential sessions have influence on relationships between people in the class?	Stay more connected as students interact more with each other	Worsening due to inconsistencies occurring during the experience activities	Remain the same
	11	4	12
Do you think experience activities should be included in the education system as an official subject?	Yes	No	X
	18	9	

The table above shows some of the students' opinions about the practical sessions and experiences outside of the classroom sessions. According to the above table, it can be seen that the majority of students are interested and feel that practical sessions and experiences are necessary in their learning process, as shown in the fact that there are 23/27 students (respectively 85%) answered "Yes" to the question "Do you feel the experience and practice sessions are necessary?" (Table 2).

Regarding the questions about the benefits of experiential learning, most of the students found the benefits in terms of knowledge as well as skills that experiential learning brings compared to theoretical sessions. The percentage is quite large, ranging from 40% to 62%.

Regarding the necessity when bringing experiential and practical activities into teaching in parallel with theory to improve learning efficiency as well as acquire knowledge and improve skills, a large number of students participated in the survey. The survey selected the answer as “Yes” to the question “Do you think the educational program and experience should be considered an official subject?”, with 18/26 students, equivalent to 69.2%.

Table 3: Limitations of practice and experience

Questions	Responses		
To you, what is the biggest drawback of learning and experiencing?	Students feel confused by being exposed to new things for the first time	Students feel tired due to many activities	It takes a long time for teachers to prepare and plan
	15	5	7
Can an experiential learning session ensure the amount of knowledge compared to learning in class?	Yes	No	X
	11	16	

In addition to the benefits mentioned above, there are still some limitations that we cannot deny. When being asked about the limitations of practice and experience, each student has different views on this issue. Most of the students felt “confused by being exposed to new things for the first time”. Because they have to be the center of the lesson as well as take the initiative in problems arising in the learning process so it is inevitable that students have this thought. Shown in 15/27 students, equivalent to 55.5% chose the above option. In addition, it is inevitable for teachers to have to plan so that the lesson takes place in order and ensures time and quality (Table 3).

One of the most important issues is the knowledge of the students. Learning by practical experience is effective in terms of being able to remember it for a long time and apply it, but on the other hand, the question is that a practical lesson does meet enough knowledge for students compared to just learning theory in class. To this question, there are 11/27 students, corresponding to 40.7% choosing the answer as "Yes", the remaining 59.3% answering "No".

Table 4: Benefits of hands-on learning and experience for students

No	Statement	1	2	3	4	5	Total answers	Total score	Level of concern
1	Easier to absorb knowledge and remember longer	2	0	2	3	20	27	120	0.06
2	Experience activities help friends become closer	1	3	8	10	5	27	148	0.07
3	Improve soft skills, teamwork	0	3	4	5	15	27	166	0.08
4	Help students improve logical thinking ability	0	2	6	5	13	26	250	0.13
5	Help students improve self-awareness to lesson preparation	2	1	9	6	9	27	203	0.10
6	Help students to be able to take care of themselves when the environment changes	1	3	6	10	7	27	182	0.09
7	Expand relationship	2	2	10	9	4	27	186	0.09
8	Actively exercise, improve health	1	3	9	12	2	27	214	0.11
9	Increase the level of interaction with friends and teachers	0	3	14	8	2	27	235	0.12
10	Practice tough mental to deal with problems happening around	0	2	15	7	3	27	278	0.14
TOTAL								1982	1

Five levels on the Likert scale correspond to 1 point being the lowest level of satisfaction and 5 points being the level of almost absolute satisfaction. According to table 4, we can see that the level of interest of students is most concentrated in the statement "Training to be tough to deal with problems happening around". It can be seen that in addition to the knowledge in school, they still have a certain interest in soft skills in life and a strong spirit to deal with unexpected problems. But that knowledge in class cannot be enough to help them confidently face reality, so practice sessions and experiences are absolutely necessary (Table 4).

Through surveys and direct interviews with high school students in Ho Chi Minh City, it can be seen that alternating learning with experiential activities is not really popular. Experiential activities are mainly limited to some subjects and have not been effectively applied to other subjects. Students in Ho Chi Minh City still find it quite strange and not active in this form of learning, possibly because they have not been exposed to this activity much and still be shy when they have to make decisions themselves during the operation. This is one of the reasons to include more hands-on and experiential activities in the teaching curriculum (Moya, 2011).

However, such practical and experiential activities are quite popular with students in schools in Ho Chi Minh City. They have been learning and exposed to the method quite often and so when answering face-to-face interviews can show confidence and interest in this learning method. And they think that real learning in the form of experience is very useful and helps them to be motivated to study the lesson rather than just having theory (Wehbi, 2011).

SOME SUGGESTIONS

Through survey and research, it is found that learning, experience, and practice must go hand in hand to have the most positive effect. And here are some suggestions to get the most out of practice and experience (Ives-Dewey, 2009).

The first is the question-and-answer method. In this method, teachers ask questions for students to answer, or students can argue with each other and with the teacher; through which students understand the content of the lesson. Based on the nature of cognitive activities, people distinguish different types of questioning and answering methods such as inquiry and answer, explanation and illustration, question and answer, repetition, etc.

The method of posing and solving problems is also one of the methods for students to have the opportunity to practice in addition to the theoretical part. In a society that is developing rapidly according to the market mechanism and fierce competition, early detection and reasonable resolution of problems arising in practice is an ability to ensure success in life, especially in business (Batu, 2010). Therefore, practicing for students to discover, pose and solve problems encountered in learning, in the lives of individuals, families, and communities is not only meaningful in terms of teaching methods but also needs to be set as an educational and training objective (Moya, 2011).

The method of group work is carried out in the form of dividing the class into small groups of 4 to 6 people. Depending on the purpose and requirements of the learning target, groups are randomly or intentionally divided, maintained stable or changed in each part of the lesson, assigned the same or different tasks (Ives-Dewey, 2009). The role-play method in this form of learning also cannot be ignored. The role-play method has the following benefits: students are trained to practice behavioral skills and express attitudes in a safe environment before practicing in practice; arouse interest and attention for students; creating conditions for students' creativity; encourage the change of students' attitudes and behaviors according to ethical and socio-political standards of behavior; can immediately see the impact and effect of the words or deeds of the roles.

In addition, the brainstorming method also helps students in a short time generate many ideas and assumptions about a certain issue (Moya, 2011). To implement this method, teachers need to provide a system of information as a premise for the discussion.

CONCLUSION

As society develops, it is also increasingly important to equip students with side skills. And hands-on experience is an activity that plays a very important role in the general education program. Along with improving the quality of teaching and learning, schools should pay more attention to experiential activities for students, helping them practice life skills, creativity in learning, and daily activities. The creative experience activity is one of the meaningful activities and a useful playground for the students to help them form and develop their qualities, personality, abilities, psychosocial well-being and help them accumulate experience, promote creativity to apply in daily life. Experience activities also help them gain more confidence and self-esteem when they can equip themselves with the necessary theoretical knowledge and soft skills. Through experiential and practical teaching, students will have more days of learning full of new experiences that bring a lot of meaning to them, teachers and parents. The lessons are always new, creating a lot of excitement so that students can clearly feel that every day at school is a happy day.

LIMITATION OF THE ARTICLE

This article was completed in a short time and due to many external factors, there are still certain limitations. Hopefully, in the near future, the article will be more carefully invested.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest in the paper.

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