

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The present study "Effectiveness of Experiential Learning Approach in Social Science in terms of Achievement and Reaction of Upper Primary Students of Assam" is experimental in nature and is related to two areas namely, Experiential Learning and Social Science. The researcher has used experiential learning methods for Social Science teaching and tried to find out whether using experiential learning methods in Social Science enhances the class VIII students' Academic Achievement in comparison to Conventional Learning Methods.

People learn in different ways, but real and lasting learning occurs only when a person is immersed in learning, engaging all the senses. To gain knowledge and experience, a person needs to have all their senses focused. As Rogers (1969) mentioned, people are inherently capable of learning. Significant learning occurs when a learner believes the content is relevant to their purpose; learning happens quickly when a person has a goal they want to accomplish and believes the material they are being given is relevant to that objective. The act of learning is continuous, a person learns every day throughout their whole life. Learning describes a range of modifications brought about by experience. Learning is illustrated by relatively permanent changes brought about by experience and practice. The primary characteristic of learning is that it always involves some kind of experience; thus, experience and learning are synonymous terms. (Beard & Wilson, P. 2). Learning should involve a variety of tasks, such as making connections between new and previous experiences, applying theories to real-world situations, and critically analysing information. One of the main factors contributing to quality learning in classrooms is the instruction provided and the pedagogy used to provide those instructions. Students' understanding of content and their achievement in the classroom mostly depend on the pedagogy used by the teacher. For this reason, learning must be facilitated by high-quality pedagogy that enables students to acquire the greatest amount of knowledge along with practical skills. Hence, rethinking

learning tasks and pedagogy is essential to the global reinvention of educational systems (Leadbeater, 2008; Scott, 2015). Reconsidering pedagogical approaches for the modern era is of paramount importance, just as crucial as delineating the new skills required by contemporary learners for enhancement (Scott, 2015).

Like other subjects, teaching social sciences has also become increasingly important in the rapidly changing educational landscape of today. The development of informed and engaged citizens is contingent upon the comprehension of social, political, economic, and cultural dynamics as societies become increasingly interconnected and complex. This field incorporates a variety of subjects, including economics, geography, civics, history, and cultural studies. Social studies education provides students with the knowledge and tools necessary to navigate complex global challenges by examining diverse perspectives, analysing societal issues, and developing critical thinking skills.

It is essential to implement effective pedagogy in social science education to cultivate critical thinking, encourage civic engagement, and increase cultural awareness among students. By employing interactive and innovative teaching methods, educators can assist students in comprehending intricate concepts, cultivating analytical abilities, and becoming active members of their communities. In order to enhance student achievement and provide them with the essential skills required for the modern world, social science education should be approached through interactive and innovative pedagogies. That is why traditional rote learning methods are being replaced by experiential and inquiry-based approaches that prioritize the development of analytical thinking, creativity, and the ability to solve problems. Experiential learning is an effective approach to education that is consistent with the requirements and prospects of the 21st century.

According to the American Psychological Association, experiential learning serves as a bridge between education and the workforce, providing students with the needed skills and experiences for their future careers. Students who engage in experiential learning are better equipped to handle a world that is becoming more complicated and dynamic by encouraging critical thinking, participation, teamwork, technological integration, and career readiness. The importance of experiential learning will probably increase as educational paradigms change, guaranteeing that students are not just educated but also competent and confident when applying their knowledge in real-life scenarios.

1.1 THE CONCEPT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

“Experience is the child of Thought, and Thought is the child of Action – we cannot learn men from books” (Benjamin Disraeli, 1826)

Although Disraeli's final sentence cannot be sustained, his underlying point contains some truth. Conventional learning, where the teacher or instructor provides only theoretical facts and information, is a relatively unproductive method of education. The teacher needs to involve the students through the creation of meaningful learning experience to provide a far more effective and lasting type of instruction and knowledge.

The process of actively engaging the individual's inner world and the environment's outer world, results in experiential learning. One of the fundamental principles of experiential learning is active engagement. Experiential learning unquestionably involves the person as a ‘whole’. Because when a person involves experiential learning, the person uses his thoughts, feelings, and physical activity. Recognizing this ‘whole environment’, internally and externally, is critical (Beard & Wilson, 2006). All learning processes involve experience, but its importance is frequently overlooked or even denied. That is why numerous authors have discussed the strong connection between experience and learning.

A relatively permanent change in knowledge, attitude, or behavior that results from formal education or training and unstructured experiences is what Wilson (2005) defines as learning. According to Kolb (1984), "learning is the process where knowledge is created by transforming experience." Thus, it would seem that experience and learning are intimately related and nearly inseparable. Since experience and learning are essentially synonyms in many ways, experiential learning is a tautology or a repetition of the same concept (Beard & Wilson, 2006). By nature, experiential learning is the bedrock of all forms of learning since it embodies the transformation of most novel and vital experiences and includes them in a more comprehensive conceptual framework (Beard & Wilson, 2006).

Talking about learning in isolation from experience seems pointless. Experience is an essential component of learning that cannot be ignored. Even though there are teachers, materials, and exciting opportunities which serve as external prompts to learning, without the engagement of the learner's experience, learning cannot occur, at

least to some extent. Learning builds on and flows from experience. These outside forces can only have an impact by altering the learner's experience. (Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993). So, the interaction between the self and the outside world, or experience, is the basis of much learning. Dewey appears to be the main proponent of learning via experience, because the term experience can be seen in the titles of several of Dewey's books, including **'Experience and Nature (1925)'**, **'Art as Experience (1934)'**, and **'Experience and Education'**.

According to experiential theorists and educational practitioners, experiential learning is unquestionably not merely memorization of abstract theoretical information, particularly when it is taught through formal, conventional means of learning like lectures and reading from textbooks (Weil & McGill, 1989). Beard and Wilson have mentioned that since experiential learning transforms most new and meaningful events and include them into a larger conceptual framework; it is essentially the process that underpins all other forms of learning. However, they have also mentioned that experience may not always lead to learning as it requires active engagement and reflection of the learner. If this isn't done, the experience will likely blend in with all the other stimulants, that assail a person's senses on a daily basis. Perceiving a stimulus, whether it be internal to us or external, can be seen of as a way of learning from one's experiences. Experiential learning can occur in both natural and artificial environments, including classrooms and outdoor spaces. One of experiential learning's main advantages is that it offers a foundational concept that unifies different learning theories into a cohesive whole. However, despite its seemingly simple nature, this philosophy is actually quite deep and makes us think critically about our identities and our definitions of experience (Beard & Wilson, 2006).

Boud et. al (1993) have summarize the link between experience, prior experience and perception by saying that in one way or another, learning is constantly connected to the past. No new concept or experience can be started with a blank slate since they are just notion that are meaningless and solitary unless they are connected to past experiences. Experience has an impact on all learning. An individual's inclinations, avoidance strategies, and approach to a task are influenced by his/her past reactions (Beard & Wilson, 2006).

Experiential learning theory presents a distinct viewpoint on the process of learning in comparison to behavioral learning theories, which are grounded in an empirical

epistemology, or the more implicit theories of learning that form the basis of conventional educational methods, methods that are rooted in a rational idealistic epistemology. As experiential learning gives primary emphasis on subjective experience and consciousness in learning, it stands out as a different learning approach than other rationalists and cognitive learning theories. The theory of Experiential Learning provides a comprehensive view of the learning process by integrating elements such as experience, perception, cognition, and behavior. (Kolb, 2015). Experiential Learning provides the foundation for an educational approach that views learning as an ongoing lifelong endeavor rooted in the intellectual principles of social psychology, philosophy, and cognitive psychology.

According to Anthony, Ewing, Jaynes, and Perkus (1990), there are 6 intrinsic traits that are frequently observed in effective experiential learning opportunities:

1. These educational approaches prioritize the needs and interests of the learners, allowing them to take control of their own learning.
2. A bigger focus on exploration, inquiry, and resolving issues is the goal of their design.
3. The focus is on how the course material can be applied in real-world scenarios.
4. A comprehensive understanding of the subject matter is emphasized, taking into account all aspects of the discipline.
5. These approaches are based on perception and how individuals perceive and interpret information.
6. The emphasis is placed on the heuristic process, which entails acquiring knowledge about the process of learning itself (Bartle, M., 2015).

A set of core principles for experiential learning has been developed by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) based on their research (Bartle, M., 2015):

1. Experiential learning is facilitated by the critical analysis, synthesis, and reflection of carefully selected experiences.
2. The goal of these experiences is to encourage kids to take charge, think critically, and own their actions.
3. During the process of experiential learning, the student take active participates in asking queries, doing investigations, testing, displaying curiosity, problem-solving, taking responsibility, being innovative, and generating meaning.

4. Learners are involved physically, intellectually, emotionally, and/or socially. The sense of the learning task is authentic as created by this involvement.
5. The learning outcomes are individual and serve as a foundation for further experiences and education.
6. Students establish and cultivate relationships with themselves, their peers, and the world around them.
7. Since it is impossible to know in advance how an experience will turn out, both the teacher and the student may face a range of possible outcomes, including accomplishment and disappointment, excitement and danger, and lack of clarity.
8. Both students and teachers have the chance to delve deeply into the topic of personal values and evaluate them objectively.
9. The main responsibilities of the teacher include encompass creating appropriate learning opportunities, presenting challenging tasks, establishing limits, providing assistance to students, ensuring their physical and mental well-being, and guiding the educational process.
10. The teacher acknowledges and promotes impromptu occasions for acquiring knowledge.
11. Teachers attempt to be conscious of their biases, assessments, and preconceived notions, and how these impact the learner.
12. The learning experience design incorporates the opportunity to acquire knowledge from the outcomes of natural consequences, errors, and achievements.

Carl Rogers outlines key principles of experiential learning in his book "Freedom to Learn" (1969):

1. **Relevance to Interests:** Significant learning occurs when the material is relevant to the student's personal interests.
2. **Minimized External Threats:** Learning that challenges existing attitudes or perspectives is more easily absorbed when external pressures are minimized.
3. **Low Threat to Self:** The learning process is more rapid when there is little threat to the self.
4. **Self-Initiated Learning:** Self-initiated learning tends to be the most enduring and widespread

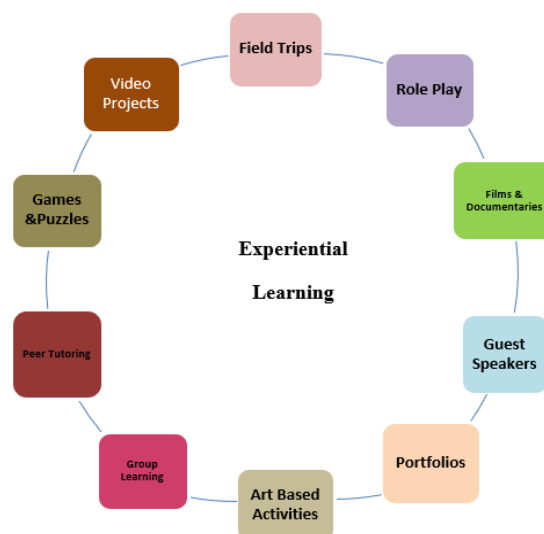
Carl Rogers has also identified five key elements of experiential learning in his book "Freedom to Learn" (1969):

1. **Personal involvement:** Significant learning involves personal engagement, where the entire person, including their emotions and cognition, participates in the learning process.
2. **Self-initiation:** Even if the initial stimulus comes from an external source, the sense of discovery and understanding is driven by the learner.
3. **Pervasiveness:** Significant learning impacts the learner's behavior, attitudes, and possibly their personality.
4. **Learner evaluation:** The learner assesses whether the learning meets their needs, contributes to their knowledge, and clarifies their areas of ignorance.
5. **Intrinsic meaning:** When significant learning occurs, it inherently holds meaning for the learner, integrating it into the overall experience.

Internships, practices, service learning, professional development, cooperative education, collaborative learning, work-based learning, and work-integrated learning are all examples of practice-associated activities that are commonly linked to experiential. Beyond classroom instruction, however, experiential learning involves a wide range of activities with an emphasis on students' individual growth in areas such as cognition, social interaction, and self-awareness (Burch, G.F. 2019).

1.1.1 STRATEGIES OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Figure 1.1 - Strategies of Experiential Learning



1.2 GENESIS OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

From Socrates to David Kolb and beyond, a number of thinkers laid the groundwork for experiential learning. Greek philosophers Socrates, Plato and Aristotle have several contributions towards experiential learning and are comprehensively documented (Allison, 2011; Crosby, 1995; Kraft, 1985; Hunt, 1999; Wurdinger, 1997). Socrates made a significant contribution to experiential learning through his *elenctic* method, also known as the Socratic method. This approach involved asking thought-provoking questions to help individuals understand what they know and do not know, promoting self-discovery and reflection. By emphasizing the importance of examining one's life and thoughts, Socrates highlighted the essential role of reflection in the experiential pattern of inquiry, asserting that an unexamined life is not worth living. His dedication to seeking truth and understanding, even at the cost of his own life, set a high standard for educators in their pursuit of knowledge and wisdom. Socrates' influence on experiential learning continues to be relevant today, emphasizing the value of critical thinking, self-discovery, and reflection in the educational process.

Like Socrates, Plato also contributed towards experiential learning through his intellectual stimulation and challenging perspectives. In his dialogues, Plato's Socratic method, emphasizing questioning to prompt self-discovery, laid the foundation for experiential inquiry. Furthermore, Plato's critical views on democracy, highlighting the importance of upbringing and training in shaping individuals, provoke reflection among practitioners of experiential learning who value democratic principles. By intellectually engaging readers and pushing them to define their positions, Plato's influence on experiential learning extends beyond mere philosophical roots to actively stimulating thought and self-examination.

After Socrates and Plato, Aristotle's contribution to experiential learning lies in his emphasis on the development of character through experiences that shape informed judgment. He believed that true virtue cannot be instilled in a short period but requires a lifetime of experiences to cultivate. Aristotle's philosophy highlights the importance of experiential learning in providing individuals with opportunities to better understand themselves and others, ultimately aiding in their moral journey and the development of practical wisdom (*phronesis*). By integrating Aristotle's ideas into educational practices, educators can foster a deeper understanding of morality and

character development through experiential learning, aligning with the ancient Greek emphasis on virtue and ethics within the field of education.

Experiential Learning Theory was developed based on the contributions of influential scholars from the nineteenth century, recognized as the Foundation Scholars of experiential learning. This group includes renowned figures such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Carl Jung, William James, Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers, and Mary Parker Follett. These academics engaged in scientific investigation by viewing it as a process of acquiring knowledge through firsthand encounters, employing meticulous observation, and analysing their individual experiential insights (Kolb, 2015).

John Locke (1632-1704) proposed empiricism, stating knowledge and ideas arise from experience. He argued that experience teaches what reason cannot. John Locke's contributions include empiricism, social contract theory, and natural rights. According to Locke the mind remains a tabula rasa, described as a blank slate, until it is exposed to experiences in the form of both sensation and reflection. These experiences serve as the fundamental elements, known as simple ideas, from which the majority of our intricate knowledge is formulated.

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) also contended that authentic knowledge, regardless of being theoretical or ethical in nature, necessitates acquisition through observation and experience. He underscored the significance of experience as the singular and primary source of knowledge, refuting the concept of innate knowledge that circumvents observation and validation. Through rigorous observation and analysis, Mill held that information acquired through experience can be tested, validated, and confirmed. Mill's viewpoint is consistent with the empiricist tradition, stressing the influence of experience on how individuals perceive the world.

William James (1841-1910) is the creator of the philosophy of radical empiricism and can be given equal status with Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget, as radical empiricism is an epistemological foundation for experiential learning (Kolb, 2015). James believed that experience is the source and the end of everything. The radical empiricism philosophy has implications for experiential learning theory and the experiential learning cycle. Specifically, it means that all forms of learning are experiential, not only the Concrete Experience mode.

James underlined how experience is fundamental to human comprehension and knowledge. He maintained that experience is the foundation for learning and

development and that our ideas and beliefs are derived from it. Similar to this, experiential learning highlights the value of first-hand, hands-on experience in the learning process as people interact with real-world scenarios and consider their experiences to enhance their comprehension.

John Dewey (1859-1952) started the progressive education movement in 1896 by establishing the experimental schools in University of Chicago which marked the beginning of his contribution to experiential learning. With his emphasis on active learning, reflection, the integration of theory and practice, democratic education, and naturalistic learning environments, John Dewey laid the groundwork for the development of experiential learning as a pedagogical approach that continues to shape modern educational practices. Not every experience is equally educating, according to Dewey. Learning experiences promote curiosity, initiative, and purpose while fostering moral and intellectual development and the good of the community. His ideas on experiential learning have had a significant influence on education theory and practice. Dewey thought that academic disciplines and the transfer of knowledge were too focused in traditional education, isolating pupils from experiences in the real world and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts. In order to close the gap between classroom learning and experiential learning, Dewey promoted restructuring of educational programme. In order to improve students' comprehension and involvement, he underlined the significance of developing educational projects that were more connected with daily life. In his seminal work '**Experience and Education (1938)**', John Dewey defended the idea of learning by doing in education. He demonstrated how people learn by playing new roles, which leads to the creation of new information and personal transformation. Dewey favored using observations and common experiences to teach children the fundamentals of academics. According to Dewey a child's quality of experience is crucial if they are to learn by doing. Dewey promoted a holistic approach to education by pushing for a curriculum that places a high value on experiential and hands-on learning. The core tenets of experiential learning that is, learning via practical experience and reflective practice are mirrored in Dewey's experiential learning model, which is a cycle of action, reflection, and refinement. Dewey believed that learning happens through active engagement with experiences, reflection on those experiences, and the application of insights gained to future actions.

Key ideas of experiential learning are outlined in the following passages from his 1897 article ‘**My Pedagogic Creed**’:

- Education should be viewed as an ongoing process of reconstructing experiences; its purpose and method are synonymous.
- Education is a live process rather than a means of preparing for it.
- Education, that does not come from engaging in worthwhile endeavours is always a poor stand-in for authentic reality and has a tendency to constrict and deaden.
- Interests are the indicators of increasing strength and they stand for emerging abilities. The adult can only become involved in a child's life and determine what it is ready for by watching the child's interests with empathy and persistence. (Experiential Learning, Kolb, 2015, p. 25).

Mary Parker Follett (1868–1933) has given credit to profound experience as secrets to creativity, will, and power. She emphasized the significance of completely surrendering oneself to every new encounter, blending previous experiences with current ones in order to enhance personal development and comprehension. Follett emphasizes the comprehensive integration of prior information, current actions, and future goals in a dynamic cycle of learning and progress, which is in line with the experiential learning framework.

Kurt Lewin’s (1890-1947) work on group dynamics and action research, which has had broad practical application, produced major contributions to experiential learning. In order to provide formal frameworks for describing subjective experiences, he established the T-Group laboratory approach and action research. Understanding human behavior and promoting experiential learning processes have benefited greatly from Lewin's work on group dynamics and action research approaches. According to Lewin, the process of learning is developmental and incorporates feedback systems that convert personal experiences into learning goals. He also highlighted how learning has a transformative quality, transforming impulses, feelings, and desires from tangible experiences into higher-order intentional acts.

Carl Rogers (1902-1987) highlighted the significance of experience in the process of learning and believed that it was central to one's own development. He saw experiencing as a moment-specific, fluid, and flexible process that enables people to explore the richness of the present and incorporate knowledge from the past. Rogers perceived experiential learning as a self-driven pursuit, underscoring the significance

of intrinsic motivation and determination for exploration and understanding. The learning style outlined by Carl Rogers in his book 'Freedom to Learn' places a strong emphasis on the significance of student autonomy, experiential learning, and adaptable educational experiences. He perceived experiential learning as a mechanism that sheds light on areas of lack of knowledge, caters to the requirements of learners, and steers them towards obtaining knowledge that is in harmony with their interests and objectives.

Lev Vygotsky's (1896–1934) social constructivism theory has received less focus as the root of experiential learning as compared to the constructivism of Piaget (Kaye, 2002; Kolb, 2015). He is most recognized for his formulation of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), a pedagogical construct that facilitates the progression from a stage of instruction requiring assistance from a more knowledgeable individual to a stage of autonomous expert-level performance. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory of Vygotsky is consistent with experiential learning since it highlights the role that social contact plays in the learning process. The ZPD provides a framework for understanding how learners can advance with the guidance of more knowledgeable others, promoting experiential learning through collaborative interactions. Vygotsky's ideas provide support for the experiential learning process that integrates individual traits with external conditions for holistic development, acknowledging the impact of cultural and social elements on learning.

Carl Jung (1875-1961) can be considered as one of the most revolutionary empirical scholars, drawing a significant portion of his theoretical framework from profound interactions with his intense personal encounters, dreams, and symbols originating from his unconscious mind. He underscored the significance of experiential learning as the primary and only origin of wisdom, dismissing the concept of instinctive knowledge that circumvents empirical observation and validation (Kolb, 2015). Jung's notion of individuation, which emphasizes the integration of opposing aspects such as consciousness and unconsciousness, serves as the cornerstone of experiential learning theory.

Paulo Freire (1921–1997) has made a significant contribution to the philosophy of experiential learning by emphasizing critical consciousness and discourse as crucial elements of learning. He was of the opinion that the capacity for critical thinking empowers individuals to identify the correlations between personal encounters and wider societal frameworks. Freire's notion of praxis, encompassing contemplation and

intervention for societal change, corresponds with the experiential learning process through its emphasis on the significance of utilizing knowledge within authentic environments. Freire's research highlights the transformative capacity of experiential education in emancipating individuals from rigid self-concepts enforced by oppressive systems.

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) transformed educational processes by introducing a holistic and integrated approach to experiential learning, making significant contributions to the subject. He founded Visva-Bharati University in Santiniketan, expressing his educational ideology that emphasizes learning as a spontaneous, delightful, and comprehensive experience. Tagore prioritized the integration of education and nature, the cultivation of creativity, and the promotion of cultural consciousness. He advocated for students to actively interact with their surroundings, immersing them in the world to acquire knowledge. Tagore's approach encompassed outdoor lessons, practical assignments, the incorporation of arts and music, and community engagement, all with the goal of nurturing students' intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. His methodology not only fostered the development of analytical thinking and originality, but also instilled a feeling of accountability and global awareness, resulting in his lasting and worldwide impactful contributions to experiential learning.

Swami Vivekananda (1863-1902) acknowledged the significance of experiential learning and pragmatic knowledge. He stressed the significance of integrating theoretical knowledge with practical implementation, allowing students to connect academic concepts with real-world scenarios. According to Swami Vivekananda, reading books, attending lectures, and engaging in discussions may provide us with knowledge, but true understanding and enlightenment can only be gained through personal experience. It is optimal in its current state. Vivekananda posits that genuine knowledge and comprehension are derived from firsthand, experiential encounters rather than from secondhand information.

Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) celebrated for his doctrine of nonviolent opposition, additionally provided noteworthy insights into experiential learning via his principles and methodologies. Gandhi's educational programmes placed a strong emphasis on in-depth study and introspection, directing the modern Indian educational system towards social change and holistic growth. Gandhi was in favor of concrete and active learning through craft or art-based work education. Gandhi's Nai Talim, also known

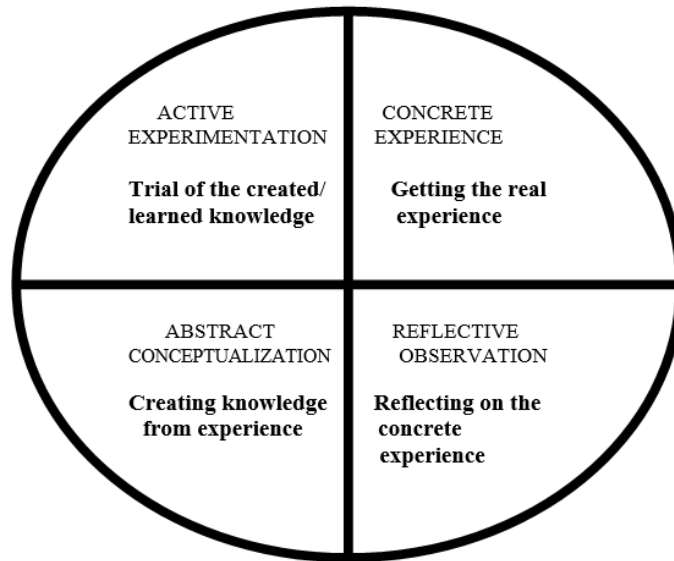
as basic education, emphasized the principles of discovery, practical application, and exploration. This approach allows children to acquire knowledge through hands-on and direct experience.

Jiddu Krishnamurty (1895-1986) promoted an educational framework that fosters self-awareness, analytical reasoning, and the comprehensive growth of individuals. Krishnamurti stressed the significance of comprehending oneself and one's surroundings via firsthand experience rather than relying on memorization or authoritative guidance.

Krishnamurti established various educational institutions, such as the Rishi Valley School in India, where he put his educational theory into practice. These institutions place a high priority on establishing an environment that helps the students to indulge in exploration, inquiry, and learning through their own personal experiences. He emphasized the importance of a teacher's function as a facilitator rather than an authoritarian figure, promoting students to inquire, observe, and comprehend their own cognitive processes.

David Kolb (1939), the chairman of Experience Based Learning Systems (EBLS), founded this organization in 1981 to do advance research and practices in the field of experiential learning. He introduced a multi-linear framework for experiential learning that emphasizes the significance of experience in the process of learning, commonly referred to as experiential learning theory. Kolb's theory is influenced by the works of Piaget, Dewey, Lewin, James etc. Kolb's theoretical framework on experiential learning encompasses four distinct stages that individuals are required to progress through in order to effectively internalize knowledge. The stages formulated by Kolb in his theory are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Kolb's theoretical framework is in accordance with the concept that the process of acquiring knowledge is an ongoing sequence in which individuals partake in various experiences, reflect on them, formulate new concepts, and put them into practice within real-world scenarios. Through the integration of these various stages, students have the opportunity to enhance their comprehension and cultivate valuable skills by engaging in experiential learning process.

Figure 1.2 - Kolb's Learning Cycle



Source: Kolb, 2015

In 2010, UNESCO suggested experiential learning as a 21st-century teaching strategy (Teaching and Learning for a sustainable future, UNESCO 2010). Various organizations, including Experience Based Learning Systems (EBLS), Association for Experiential Education (AEE), World Learning, Independent Schools Experiential Education Network (ISEEN), National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE), and Institute for Experiential Learning (IFEL), are actively involved in promoting and advancing experiential learning due to its increasing demand and significance.

1.3 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN INDIA: HISTORICAL EVOLUTION AND POLICY INITIATIVES

In India, the genesis of experiential learning can be traced back to the ancient Gurukul system which provided education through learning by doing. Engaging students in a wide range of activities was a common method of instruction in Gurukul cultures.

Practical education during this time was most prominently displayed by the Gurukul system. There was a residential system in which pupils (called shishyas) resided with their gurus. Learning was not limited to textbooks but was instead intricately woven into every aspect of life. Whether it was by debating an issue, learning a new skill, or serving their community, students gained valuable experience via doing. Holistic

education, as advocated by Mukherjee (1974), aimed to foster students' moral and ethical development alongside their intellectual prowess.

During mid-twentieth century, in Himachal Pradesh, India the earliest evidence of experiential learning was reported, where American missionary, S. E. Stoke was running a school in Kotgarh. In the same school, American economist Richard Greggs, who drew profound inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi, had the opportunity to teach activity-based science. In 1928, he published a book called "Preparation for Science" based on his teaching philosophy, which held that students could grasp scientific topics best when they used their senses of sight, sound, smell, taste, and hearing. The central idea of the book is that children need to use all of their senses; sight, sound, touch, taste, smell, choice, arrangement, assembly, and disassembly, before they can comprehend anything. It is important for kids to play with actual objects (Gupta, A. 2010). The Indian educational system underwent a transformation during the Colonial Era, becoming increasingly exam-centric and placing an emphasis on memorization. The primary goal was to train administrative assistants and clerks to work for the British government, with little emphasis on experiential learning. During this time, there was a marked decline in the value of hands-on, experiential education. Less emphasis was placed on learning about the world and more on passing examinations. This change had far-reaching effects on Indian education, which persisted throughout the twentieth century in placing an emphasis on theory rather than practice (Chatterjee, 1976).

Madrasas and Pathshalas were established in Indian education during the medieval period. Although the emphasis shifted somewhat toward religious education, experiential learning continued to be a significant factor, particularly in the areas of vocational training and practical life skills. Although this varied significantly depending on the institution and region, students in these institutions frequently acquired knowledge through practical engagement in community life and local crafts. Following India's independence in 1947, the country's educational system put more effort on cultivating analytical thinking and practical abilities. A major force in the development of contemporary educational policy, the Kothari Commission (1964-66) pushed for the incorporation of work experience into the curriculum. The Commission's report underscored the necessity of incorporating work experience into the educational system, emphasizing the necessity of a curriculum that integrated

academic learning with practical, real-world experiences. This was considered to be indispensable for the development of students' critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities (Kothari Commission Report, 1966).

The Indian education system underwent a substantial transformation as a result of the National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986. The policy acknowledged the constraints of the rote-learning-based system and underscored the necessity of a more comprehensive educational approach. The NPE 1986 made the incorporation of work experience into the curriculum one of its primary recommendations. This encompassed activities that necessitated students to interact with real-world scenarios, thereby fostering experiential learning. The policy also mandated the establishment of vocational education programs that would equip students with practical skills, thereby preparing them for the workforce (NPE, 1986).

NPE 1986 was followed by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005, which expanded upon the concepts introduced by NPE 1986. It favored a constructivist approach to education, in which students are encouraged to construct their knowledge through experiences rather than passively absorbing information. The NCF 2005 underscored the significance of transforming the learning process into a meaningful and enjoyable experience, particularly in the context of social science education. It recommended that students participate in activities, field trips, and initiatives that enable them to directly investigate social issues and cultivate a more profound comprehension of their social surroundings (NCF, 2005). The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been influential in fostering experiential learning within the Indian school system. NCERT has created multiple frameworks, standards, and curricular materials over time that prioritize experiential learning as a fundamental pedagogical strategy.

By highlighting kid-friendly and activity-based pedagogies, the Right to Education (RTE) Act of 2009 provided indirect support for experiential learning. According to the act, classroom instruction should focus on helping students develop their cognitive, social, and emotional capacities via hands-on activities and group projects. The most recent and comprehensive endeavor to reform India's education system is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The promotion of experiential learning at all levels of education is one of the central themes of the NEP 2020. Students are encouraged to investigate subjects in an interconnected manner, rather than in isolation, as the policy promotes a multidisciplinary approach to education. This is

especially pertinent to social science education, as comprehending the intricacies of society necessitates an interdisciplinary viewpoint (NEP, 2020). The NEP 2020 also underscores the significance of incorporating vocational education and apprenticeships into the school curriculum, beginning at the upper primary level. This is intended to equip students with practical skills and real-world experience, which are considered essential for their overall development. The policy mandates the establishment of opportunities for students to participate in internships, practicum, and community service, all of which are essential components of experiential learning.

Apart from the above stated policies, the govt. of India and several other organizations have taken various initiatives for the promotion of experiential learning in India such as-

A. Initiatives taken by the central government:

- ❖ **Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan (RAA):** - Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan (RAA) has been set up by Ministry of Human Resource Development in 2015. The Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan is a notable endeavour that seeks to encourage hands-on learning, namely in the domains of science and mathematics. The RAA promotes the cultivation of curiosity and originality in students within schools and higher education institutions. It includes activities such as scientific fairs, model construction, and field trips, which are intended to enhance learning by making it more participatory and captivating (MHRD, 2015).
- ❖ **Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL):** - Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) has been set up by NITI Aayog in 2016; aim to cultivate inventiveness, inquisitiveness, and imaginative thinking among young students. These laboratories offer students the necessary tools and equipment to engage in practical projects, namely in the areas of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The objective of the ATL program is to foster a mindset of innovation and hands-on learning in schools throughout India (NITI Aayog, 2018).
- ❖ **SWAYAM and Other Online Platforms:** - The Indian government has implemented many online platforms, such as SWAYAM, to facilitate experiential learning. These platforms provide a diverse range of courses that motivate students to actively participate in solving practical problems and analysing real-world case studies. The

integration of technology in education has created additional opportunities for hands-on learning, increasing its availability to students nationwide (MHRD, 2017).

- ❖ **CBSE (Central Board of Education):** CBSE has recognized that transforming the pedagogical processes of teaching and learning in schools is a necessary intervention to prepare students for the future. The theme for teacher training in CBSE for Session 2019-20 was experiential learning, which aims to make the educational system learner focused and the pedagogy more creative and joyful.

B. Initiatives taken by various states:

- ❖ **Uttar Pradesh:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, UP, with funding from UNICEF, launched the Aao Angrezi Seekhen campaign on July 17, 2017, to help kids improve their English. All of the course materials were created by the Centre of Learning Resources (CLR) in Pune. The 15-minute bilingual interactive series, featuring Sunita didi as a radio teacher, teaches English to young Hindi-speaking children in a classroom setting. The series relies on local language support and is designed as a dramatized series. The program is innovative, interactive, and child-friendly, with radio lessons incorporating skits, songs, and language games. The classroom teacher also revises the lessons herself.
- ❖ **Tamil Nadu:** The State Council of Education Research and Training (SCERT) Tamil Nadu has created DVDs featuring all poems from the Tamil Book for grades 1 to 5, allowing female and male students from Government schools to sing these poems in an authentic environment. The DVDs feature young children's exuberant expression, providing an enjoyable and educational experience for all primary schools in Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ **Chhattisgarh:** The Chhattisgarh Government made the decision to enhance the declining state of primary education following the announcement of the NAS class III results. They began to prioritize the development of early grade numeracy and literacy skills. Additionally, to bolster mathematical proficiency, it formed collaboration with Sampark Foundation. The foundation contributed to the development of educational kits for mathematics and English, specifically designed for schools.
- ❖ **Nagaland:** Nagaland State has implemented the ACL (Activity and Competency Learning) program in 690 schools. This educational system encompasses all elements of learner-centred education and encourages creative learning through activities and

skills. The system places great emphasis on Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) of children, which includes early literacy and mathematics. This unique educational project is considered highly important in the State.

- ❖ **Delhi's Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum (EMC):** Aiming to foster an entrepreneurial spirit and practical business acumen in the next generation, the Delhi government launched the Entrepreneurship Mindset Curriculum in 2019. The curriculum is a big step towards experiential learning in schools since it incorporates internships, hands-on projects, and interactions with entrepreneurs (Delhi Government, 2019).
- ❖ **Maharashtra's Activity-Based Learning (ABL):** The Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research and Training (MSCERT) has been actively advocating for the implementation of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) in primary schools. This approach promotes the utilization of hands-on exercises and real-world illustrations to instruct ideas, especially in disciplines such as social sciences and environmental studies (MSCERT, 2017).
- ❖ **Karnataka's 'Nali Kali' Program:** The fundamental objective of the 'Nali Kali' (Joyful Learning) initiative in Karnataka is to enhance the engagement and enjoyment of elementary school students in the learning process. The approach employed is child-centric and activity-based, allowing kids to acquire knowledge through engaging in group activities, storytelling, and hands-on experiences. The program has played a crucial role in enhancing student engagement and increasing learning results in rural areas (Government of Karnataka, 2016).

C. Initiatives taken by various non-profit organizations:

- ❖ **Pratham's 'Read India' Program:** Pratham, a prominent education non-governmental organization (NGO) in India, has been executing the 'Read India' initiative. This initiative is specifically designed to enhance literacy and numeracy abilities through hands-on learning experiences. The curriculum employs interactive techniques, such as storytelling, games, and community-based learning activities, to augment students' educational experiences (Pratham, 2019).
- ❖ **Agastya International Foundation:** The unique science education initiatives of the non-profit Agastya International Foundation encourage students to learn by doing. Students in underprivileged and rural areas have access to Agastya's science centers,

mobile labs, and hands-on workshops, which allow them to participate in real-world scientific projects and experiments (Agastya, 2017).

- ❖ **Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Field Action Projects:** In the field of social work and social science education, TISS was an early adopter of experiential learning. The Field Action Projects at TISS allow students to put theory into practice by working on community development projects, conducting field research, and implementing social interventions (TISS 2018).
- ❖ **Disha India Education Foundation:** Disha India Education Foundation was established as a non-profit social organization in 1956 under the provisions of section 8 of the companies Act. The mission of the Disha India Education Foundation is to bring about a paradigm shift in Indian education by redefining education and curricula in accordance with the principles of *Nai-Talim* and Experiential Learning. In the village of Padha in the state of Haryana, Disha India is establishing its first community school with the goal of learning about and reimagining the Nai-Talim concepts as they pertain to modern times. Disha India has collaborated extensively with The Heritage Xperiential Learning School, Gurgaon to develop and execute an experiential curriculum and pedagogy for the primary program and international school. Disha India also organizes and leads KHOJ Learning Expeditions for children, tailored to meet curriculum requirements, children's interests, and life skills. Annually, around 1200 students participate in KHOJ as a component of their academic program. Participating schools in KHOJ include The Heritage Xperiential Learning School in Gurgaon, Bombay International School in Mumbai, American International School in Chennai, Daly College in Indore, and DPS Surat (Disha India Foundation).
- ❖ **CIEEL (Centre for Inter-cultural Experiential Education and Learning):** CIEEL is a platform that facilitates experiential learning and promotes innovative and effective techniques for the advancement of experiential education globally. The CIEEL programs encompass Field Work Internships, Experiential Education, and Research & Publications. (CIEEL).

D. Initiatives taken by the state of Assam:

- ❖ **Value Education Project, Assam (Holistic Education for Productivity and Harmony (HEPAH)):** Assam has initiated a long-term project to deliver Value-

Based Experiential Learning in government schools. Since mid-2020, preliminary project activities have commenced, and the remaining activities are being conducted with the intention of implementing them in government schools as of the academic year 2021. The project seeks to cultivate children's values and skills, facilitating their adaptation to change and fostering productivity and harmony. Educators will employ handbooks, audiovisual materials, puppets, and animations to include these fundamental values into the curriculum. Subject matter experts and organizations will assist in the development of curricular guidelines and materials for various levels of school education.

- ❖ **SSA programme partnership with ECHO India:** Assam has initiated the implementation of the NEP 2020. Samagra Shiksha Assam, in partnership with ECHO India, intends to provide professional development opportunities for school leaders and instructors in 1,000 schools. In 2021, the pilot ECHO program on school leadership supported over 60 school leaders from 33 districts in the development of transformational leaders who are capable of addressing the challenges of the 21st century through experiential learning. The curriculum encompassed a variety of leadership domains, including the development of a school vision, the enhancement of school culture, and the involvement of families and communities. The interaction and the problem cases presented by the participants on a variety of topics contribute to the development of solution-based learning in sessions that address topics such as community collaboration and student engagement.
- ❖ **10 Bagless Days:** In accordance with the National Education Policy 2020's objective of experiential and holistic learning, schools in Assam are being requested to establish a 10-day bagless period for pupils in Classes VI to VIII. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has written to the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) to recommend that students participate in activities such as arts, quizzes, athletics, and vocational crafts. The policy also promotes regular exposure to activities outside of school by facilitating visits to higher educational institutions, as well as historical, cultural, and tourist locations. The objectives of the guidelines are to ensure that students have a stress-free, enjoyable, and experiential learning experience.
- ❖ **Initiative of Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati:** In accordance with the state's commitment to the National Educational Policy, 2020, IIT Guwahati is spearheading mentoring and training efforts for educators and students. The institute

conducted a specialized five-day orientation workshop for 110 schools on February 5, 2024, in conjunction with an ongoing teacher training program. This project emphasizes IITG's dedication to cultivating a culture of innovation and experiential learning.

From the above stated initiatives taken by central government, state government and non-profit organization, it is clear that experiential learning is gaining recognition as an essential part of education in India. Policy initiatives are moving towards incorporating it into the mainstream education system. However, India will need to consistently invest effort and demonstrate a strong dedication to ensure that educational institutions effectively incorporate the experiential learning approach in their teaching methods.

1.4 CONCEPT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

The social sciences cover a broad variety of societal concerns and incorporate several subjects from disciplines such as History, geography, political science, economics, sociology, and anthropology. The inclusion of Social Science viewpoints and information is essential for the development of a comprehensive knowledge base that promotes a fair and harmonious society (NCF 2005). The scope of social sciences is extensive and inclusive, offering a diverse range of knowledge. As per the American National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), -Social Studies refer to the comprehensive examination of the social sciences and humanities with the aim of fostering civic competency. Social studies, as part of the school curriculum, involve a comprehensive and organized study that incorporates various disciplines such as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology. It also includes relevant content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The main objective of social studies is to facilitate the cultivation of the capacity among young individuals to make well-informed and logical choices that benefit the general welfare, as active members of a varied and democratic community within an interconnected global context. The study of social science equips individuals with the necessary knowledge and information to adapt to their society. This includes understanding the government, laws, democratic processes, historical events, social dynamics, geography, and the economy. Harris (1960) defines social studies in the *Encyclopedia of Educational*

Research as –the field that encompasses understanding human lifestyles, basic human needs, the activities humans engage in to fulfill these needs and the institutions they have established.¶

1.4.1 FEATURES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994) has described the following features of Social Studies-

- Social science teaching and learning are most effective when they are meaningful. This requires well-designed and implemented learning experiences that are essential for making social science teaching and learning powerful and meaningful for both teachers and students. To achieve meaningful learning, it is important to refrain from relying just on rote memory of unrelated pieces of knowledge and practicing skills in isolation. The teacher should engage in reflective practices when designing, executing, and evaluating instructional strategies. Students should receive information in a manner that allows them to establish connections with their own interests, local history, cultures, and challenges. This highlights the necessity for teachers who are capable of fostering reflection.
- Social science education is most effective when it is integrative, combining a wide range of content areas with diverse instructional tools and learning activities. This integrative approach enhances the nature of social scientific education. Social studies that is powerful is characterized by both integration and being integrative in nature. It is comprehensive and inclusive, encompassing various subjects and spanning distinct times and locations. Additionally, it involves the proficient use of technology. The incorporation of these factors in social studies enhances its potency and scope.
- The effectiveness of social science education lies in its adherence to values: social studies education empowers students to form their own perspectives and equips them with the ability to address societal issues using value-based reasoning. Social science teachers provide guidance to students in developing value-based reasoning skills. Various pedagogical approaches, such as debates, discussions, collaborative learning, role-playing, and problem-solving, can greatly enhance the delivery of value-based instruction to students. These strategies encourage students to formulate their own opinions, while also promoting active listening and understanding of others' viewpoints.

- Social science teaching and learning have the greatest potent when they are stimulating. However, this does not imply making the process more complicated or overwhelming. Instead, it involves offering students carefully designed and meaningful learning experiences or activities, while also encouraging their active participation in all aspects of the learning process. Teachers must engage and stimulate students' cognitive abilities by granting them access to a diverse range of knowledge sources that encompass various viewpoints on subjects.
- Social science education is most effective when it involves active participation from both students and teachers. Active engagement is essential in the teaching and learning process. Students are required to actively participate in captivating activities and actively apply ideas and skills. Social science teachers must employ a diverse range of instructional tactics and materials that are both engaging and relevant, allowing students to connect their classroom learning to real-life applications.

The social sciences engage in scientific research in a manner similar to that of the natural and physical sciences. Social sciences have a crucial role in cultivating individuals who are accountable and rational in their behavior towards themselves, society, and the nation as a whole. Since social sciences focus on human interaction, they enable individuals to adapt to their environment. It has a role in both national and emotional integration.

1.4.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE SUBJECT

The significance of social science resides in its holistic approach to comprehending human society, its evolution, and its interconnections. Social science provides insights into human behavior, societal structures, and cultural norms. It helps students comprehend how societies function and the factors that influence social change and continuity. Social Science subject enhances civic proficiency. It motivates students to actively engage in social concerns and participate in conversations. It acts as a catalyst, empowering students to take action for community-centered development. Multiple studies confirm that the social science plays a crucial role in fostering students' involvement in their community or civic engagement (Kenna & Hensley, 2019; Maguth & Koskey, 2019; Matto et al., 2017; Stefaniak et al., 2017). Moreover, according to Dewey, quoted in Kenna & Hensley (2019), the fundamental goal of social science education is to equip the next generation with the knowledge and

abilities they'll need to tackle the social problems that plague our communities and ultimately become active members of our political and social institutions.

In social science, students learn about historical and contemporary events, which allow them to think critically and creatively about these topics. In social studies classes, we look at how the country's history relates to its current state of affairs. It is reasonable to suppose that students' critical thinking abilities are better when they report higher levels of self-efficacy in social science (Lee et al., 2016; Meral, & Tas, 2017). Social science helps students become more self-aware and well-rounded by providing them with information about different cultures, both their own and those of other races. It is the responsibility of schools to provide students with the most optimal environment for their overall growth and development (Rogayan, 2019). Therefore, promoting cultural awareness, socio-cultural beliefs, and cultural legacy is a crucial function of social science.

Several instructional approaches, like videoconferencing (Krutka & Carano, 2016), critical knowledge (Myers & Rivero, 2020), and critical media literacy (Harshman, 2018), have been discovered to foster global citizenship in the field of social science. Moreover, it is crucial to cultivate and improve students' global citizenship skills because of the constantly evolving and globally interconnected society in which they reside (Holmes, 2019). Because it aids in the development of a good social value system and teaches pupils about various cultures, social science is an important subject for modern society (Kudawe et al., 2020; Eduviere, 2018).

According to National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT, 2006), for numerous reasons, it is crucial for learners to study the social sciences, as it enables them-

- To gain insight into the community where they reside by studying its inner workings, including its management, governance, and structure, as well as the forces working to change and reshape it.
- To fully comprehend and acknowledge the principles upheld in the Indian Constitution, such as justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity, as well as the unity and integrity of the nation, and the establishment of a socialist, secular, and democratic society.

- To develop into proactive, accountable, and contemplative individuals who contribute meaningfully to society.
- To acquire the ability to show respect towards variations in viewpoints, ways of living, and cultural customs.
- To challenge and scrutinize established concepts, institutions, and methodologies.
- To cultivate a sense of enjoyment in reading, by offering children engaging reading content.
- To engage in endeavors that will facilitate the acquisition of social and life skills, and foster an understanding of the significance of these skills in the context of social interaction.

1.5 SOCIAL SCIENCE CURRICULUM FOR CLASS VIII

Class VIII comes under the Upper Primary stage as per the former 10+2 structure of education and according to National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 it comes under the Middle stage. During the upper primary stage, students will be introduced to the subject of Social Science, which incorporates content from history, geography, political science, and economics. At the same time, the youngster might also be exposed to current topics and challenges.

According to National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the goals of learning the social sciences at the upper primary level are:

- To gain comprehension of the earth as the natural environment for humans and other living organisms.
- To introduce the student to the study of their local region, state, and country within the global context.
- To introduce students to the study of Indian history while also making connections to global events of the present.
- To familiarize the student with the country's political and social systems and how they work.

The syllabus of Social Science subject covers topics such as-

2. History- Understanding Our Past

- Study of ancient, medieval, and modern Indian history with a focus on significant events, movements, and personalities.
- Emphasis on the cultural and social developments in Assam and their contributions to Indian history.
- Exploration of the freedom struggle and the role of Assam in the national movement.
- Examination of post-independence India and the integration of Assam into the Indian Union.

3. Geography- Resources and Environment

- Understanding the physical features of India with a specific focus on the geography of Assam.
- Study of natural resources, their types, distribution, and sustainable management.
- Analysis of climatic conditions, flora and fauna, and environmental conservation efforts in Assam.
- Examination of human-environment interaction and its impact on local and global scales.

4. Political Science- Social and Political Life

- Introduction to the Indian Constitution and its key features.
- Understanding the structure and functioning of local, state, and national governments.
- Exploration of democratic values, rights, and duties of citizens.
- Study of social justice, equality, and the challenges faced by marginalized communities.

5. Economics- Basic Economic Concepts

- Introduction to fundamental economic concepts such as demand, supply, production, and consumption.
- Examination of the agricultural sector, with a focus on the economy of Assam.
- Understanding the industrial and service sectors and their roles in the economy.
- Discussion of economic development, poverty, and measures for sustainable growth.

The integration of Geography and Economics can provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between the environment, resources, and development across several scales, ranging from local to global. Indian history will be presented with a focus on the ideas of diversity and transformation. The child will get an understanding of the establishment and operation of governments at the local, state, and national levels, as well as the democratic methods of involvement. Political science emphasizes the examination of the philosophical principles that form the basis of the value system of the Indian Constitution. This includes a thorough exploration of concepts such as equality, liberty, justice, fraternity, dignity, plurality, and freedom from exploitation (NCERT-NFG, 2006).

1.6 IMPORTANCE OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

In social science, students are encouraged to develop well-reasoned arguments, distinguish fact from opinion, and analyze and evaluate various sources of information. Through debates, simulations, and research projects, students acquire the ability to think critically, challenge assumptions, and evaluate multiple viewpoints. Teaching social studies is not merely about disseminating facts and information; it is essential for the development of responsible, informed, and well-rounded citizens. This multifaceted approach comprises the development of critical thinking, the promotion of civic engagement, the cultivation of cultural awareness, and the provision of students with the necessary skills to navigate and contribute to a complex and dynamic society.

The most effective pedagogy for teaching social science in schools is the establishment of a dynamic and interactive learning environment that fosters critical thinking, active engagement, and the practical application of knowledge. Experiential learning is a critical approach that enables students to fully engage with historical events, economic principles, geographical studies, and political systems through collaborative projects, field trips, simulations, and hands-on activities. Various experiential learning strategies and activities can be implemented in any classroom, regardless of the subject matter—literature, science, or social sciences. Experiential learning, a learning approach that prioritizes active participation and practical implementation of knowledge, holds significant importance in the field of social sciences. Experiential learning can greatly improve the comprehension of complicated social science courses like geography, economics, history, and political science for students in Class VIII, who are usually between the ages of 13 and 14. This method encourages a more profound bond with the subject matter, stimulates analytical thinking, and equips students for engaged participation in society. This section delves into the significance of experiential learning in all of these social science areas.

➤ **Enhancing engagement and interest**

I. GEOGRAPHY

Field visits: provide students with the opportunity to directly examine and comprehend physical and human geography ideas by visiting geographical features such as rivers, mountains, and urban areas. For instance, a visit to a river can facilitate students' understanding of river development, erosion, and the water cycle. **Map making:** engaging kids in map-making activities can boost their spatial awareness and geographical skills by having them create their own maps of their local area.

II. ECONOMICS

Market visits: involve arranging trips to nearby marketplaces or enterprises, providing students with the opportunity to witness economic ideas being used in real-life situations. They have the opportunity to directly observe the impact of supply and demand on prices and gain insights into the operations of organizations.

Economic simulations projects: Developing classroom models of economies enables students to gain practical insights into economic systems and fundamental concepts such as scarcity, trade, and money management.

III. HISTORY

Historical reenactments: it serves as a means to engage students in the active recreation of past events, so enhancing their understanding and appreciation of history. For example, students have the opportunity to engage in role-playing activities that depict events from historical periods such as the independence movements or mediaeval times.

Museum visits and artifact handling: engaging in museum visits and the direct manipulation of historical artifacts can establish concrete links to the past, enhancing the relatability and memorability of historical events and periods.

IV. POLITICAL SCIENCE

Mock elections and debates: organizing mock elections and debates in the classroom provides pupils with a practical understanding of democratic procedures and the significance of active participation in civic affairs.

Visits to government institutions: visiting government institutions offers opportunities to gain insights into the functioning of political systems and the role of governance through tours of local government offices or interactions with public officials.

➤ Promoting critical thinking and problem-solving

I. GEOGRAPHY

Environmental projects: engaging students in environmental projects that tackle local environmental issues, such as pollution or conservation efforts, promotes the development of critical thinking and problem-solving abilities. Students have the opportunity to examine the root causes of environmental problems and suggest effective solutions.

Geospatial technology: introducing students to geospatial technologies, such as GIS (Geographic Information Systems), can improve their analytical abilities by enabling them to visualize and analyze data that is related to specific locations.

II. ECONOMICS

Entrepreneurial projects: promoting entrepreneurial thinking and the actual application of economic principles, entrepreneurial projects encourage students to initiate their own small company endeavors or develop business strategies.

Economic simulations: conducting economic simulations in the classroom, which replicate economic crises or policy alterations, aids students in comprehending the intricacies of economic decision-making and its ramifications on society.

III. HISTORY

Historical investigations: engaging students in historical investigations by assigning them to explore and examine historical events or notable persons and thereafter present their discoveries fosters the development of critical thinking and research proficiency. They acquire the skills to analyze materials in a critical manner and create narratives that are supported by evidence.

Debating historical interpretations: engaging students in conversations regarding various historical interpretations promotes critical thinking and cultivates an awareness of the subjective character of historical information.

IV. POLITICAL SCIENCE

Policy analysis projects: assigning students to analyze and propose solutions to contemporary political challenges through policy analysis projects fosters critical thinking skills and enhances their comprehension of policy-making processes.

Legislative process simulation: engaging students in simulated legislative sessions, where they propose, discuss, and vote on proposals, enhances their comprehension of the intricacies involved in the process of law-making and governance.

➤ **Developing Essential Skills**

I. GEOGRAPHY

Team projects: group projects initiatives, such as mapping local resources or designing a sustainable community, enhance teamwork, communication and project management abilities.

Field research: engaging in field research, such as conducting surveys or environmental studies, improves the ability to gather, analyses, and report data.

II. ECONOMICS

Budgeting exercises: instructing pupils in the creation and administration of budgets cultivates financial literacy and practical life competencies.

Economic debates: participating in economic debates fosters the development of critical thinking, public speaking, and argumentation abilities.

III. HISTORY

Research projects: undertaking extensive research projects on historical subjects promotes the development of research skills, critical thinking, and the capacity to integrate information from diverse sources.

Storytelling: fostering pupils' imaginative narration of historical events helps improve their communication and storytelling skills.

IV. POLITICAL SCIENCE

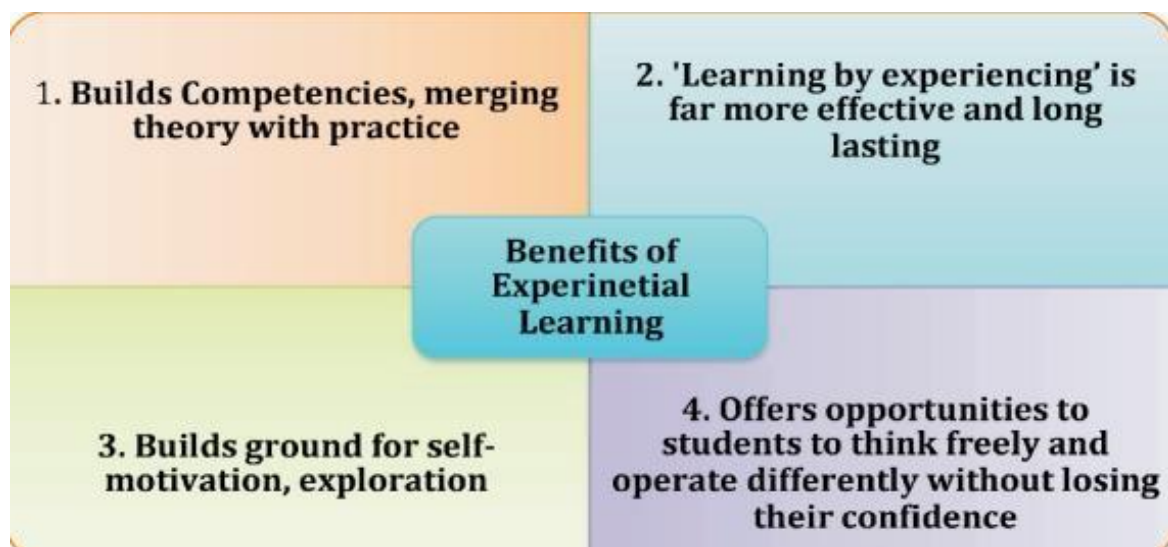
Public speaking: engaging in debates and simulated elections enhances one's proficiency in public speaking, persuasion, and bargaining.

Civic engagement activities: civic engagement activities, such as participating in community service or school government, foster civic duty and cultivate leadership abilities.

The experiential learning approach greatly improves student engagement and interest by promoting active involvement, showcasing real-world significance, stimulating cooperation and social contact, and enabling personalization and ownership of learning. By integrating different experiential learning methods and techniques such as multimedia presentations, problem-solving activities, primary source analysis, discussion, role-play, dramatization, crafts, games, case studies, storytelling, storyboarding, service learning, visits and walks to relevant places like monuments, museums, forests, public facilities etc., community engagement, simulations, debates, project-based learning, and field excursions, educators can establish a dynamic and immersive learning environment. Students cultivate a zeal for social science, acquire a more comprehensive understanding of the world, and become active participants in the development of their communities and society through experience-based learning.

The following diagram given by CBSE (2019) depicts the core benefits of Experiential Learning-

Figure 1.3- Core benefits of Experiential Learning



Source: CBSE (2019)

1.7 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

Experiential learning has become a transformational approach to education that improves student engagement, critical thinking, and information retention in diverse

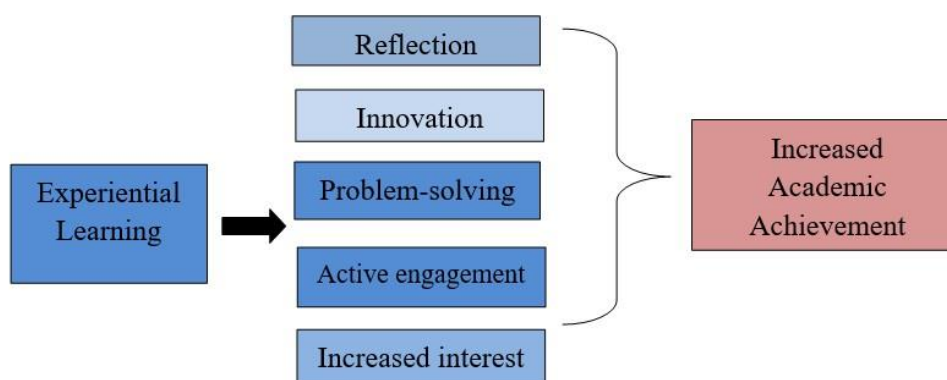
learning environments. This approach, grounded in the theories of prominent experiential educators such as John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, David Kolb, and Paulo Freire, underscores the significance of direct experience, active engagement and reflective observation in the learning process. John Dewey, a pioneer of experiential learning, contended that education ought to be founded on the notion of learning through action, wherein students actively confront real-world challenges to develop their own comprehension. Kurt Lewin created the notion of action research, wherein learning occurs through a cyclical process of action, observation, and reflection, essential for the practical application of information. Jean Piaget highlighted the cognitive growth of learners via experiential processes, notably the notion that students generate knowledge through active engagement with their environment. David Kolb's experiential learning theory further elaborated on this, proposing a cyclical process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which has become a cornerstone of experiential learning. Additionally, Paulo Freire emphasized the significance of dialogue and critical reflection in education, enabling students to link information with their personal experiences and cultivate critical thinking. Experiential learning significantly enhances students' academic performance in a variety of areas, according to numerous studies. Students who engaged in experiential learning activities, like practical experiments and group problem-solving; demonstrated significantly greater gains in achievement than those who took a lecture-based approach, according to Hake's (1998) extensive study on interactive engagement versus traditional methods in physics education. Experiential learning, which is the process of generating knowledge and significance from real-world experiences (Yardley et al., 2012), necessitates student engagement, as agreed upon by scholars (Burch et al., 2014). Researchers have shown that experiential learning has the potential to enhance student engagement by actively engaging the learner in the learning process (Beckem and Watkins, 2012; Li et al., 2019; Winsett et al., 2016). Active learning is facilitated by experiential learning, a successful teaching method that provides real-world experiences that allow learners to critically evaluate course material and become engaged with the topic being taught (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2019).

Similar findings were made by Prince and Felder (2006) in their assessment of engineering education, who found that active learning techniques, which are essential elements of experiential learning and include cooperative and problem-based learning,

improved academic performance and comprehension of difficult ideas. Lord and Orkwiszewski (2006) discovered that students instructed through experiential learning techniques, including laboratory activities and field research, exhibited a significant enhancement in performance on standardized tests and course evaluations. Frykholm and Glasson (2005) expanded similar findings to mathematics, demonstrating that students participating in real-world problem-solving activities inside experiential learning environments outperformed their counterparts in conventional classroom settings. These studies demonstrate that experiential learning enhances comprehension, critical analysis, and retention, hence facilitating greater academic success. Although these studies primarily relate to STEM subjects, there is additional evidence indicating the efficacy of experiential learning in the humanities and social sciences. Retnowati et al. (2018) discovered that upper primary pupils who engaged in interactive activities, such as historical re-enactments and field trips, attained superior test scores compared to their peers instructed by conventional lecture-based methods. Grosser & Nel (2013) found that experiential learning techniques, including group projects and role-playing, markedly enhanced middle school students' understanding and academic performance in social studies. An individual is actively involved in experiential learning, which activates their cognitive, behavioural, and emotional processes to think, reflect, and act through investigation, reflection, conceptualization, and experimentation. Student engagement is significantly improved as experiential learning facilitates questioning, reflection, problem-solving, self-accountability, innovation, and knowledge construction through meaningful interactions with peers, materials, and facilitators (Hamidani et al. 2022).

The conceptual framework aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how experiential methods can improve learning outcomes across a broader array of subjects by addressing the research deficit in social science education and drawing on the rich legacy of experiential educators.

Figure 1.4- Conceptual Framework



1.8 RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Effective teaching-learning in any level mostly depends upon the use of effective pedagogy, though other factors also influence but appropriate use of teaching-learning strategies can increase the achievement and understanding of the learners to a great level. For facilitating meaningful learning which is more retentive and effective, teachers need to choose the teaching-learning methods very carefully. Meaningful learning, as opposed to just storing and retrieving knowledge, is a cognitive process that entails the creation and manipulation of tangible objects and mental representations (NCF 2005).

To enhance the effectiveness and potency of learning, it is crucial to provide students with a diverse range of opportunities for active engagement and conceptual development. This approach enables them to effectively apply their knowledge and comprehension to real-world problems. Accomplishing this objective presents a significant challenge for both teachers and students in classroom settings. It requires innovative teaching strategies, hands-on learning experiences, and a supportive learning environment that encourages inquiry and critical thinking. By cultivating these components, educators can assist students in bridging the disparity between abstract information and real-world implementation, preparing them for success beyond the classroom.

People can learn or acquire knowledge through their experiences, but experience must be accompanied by action and thought. Every experience has the capacity to prepare a person for his/her future life. Proper educative experience can have long lasting effect on the learner. Whatever the learners learn must be connected to the experience and

actual conditions of life. If it is segregated from the actual experiences or the conditions of life then it will be like putting the learning in a water tight compartment; resulting in little benefit from the learning.

Studies conducted by Kesercioglu (2012), Assab and Awad (2015), Joshi, K. H. (2015) Burch et. al (2019), Shivani (2018), Leal-Rodriguez et al (2018), Thote (2021), Rukhsana, B. et. al (2022) and Devi, A. (2024) found that experiential learning increases the achievement and academic performance of students in different subjects, especially in science, mathematics and language.

Joshi, K. H. (2015) in her study, ‘_effectiveness of Kolb's Experiential Learning Model for class IX students in social science subject’; found that the Model is effective in enhancement of learning for both boys and girls. Michael, R. (2014) also found that the ‘_Experiential Learning Model’ is effective in developing Socio-Emotional Competencies of class IX students in comparison of ‘_Activity Oriented Method’. Seerat (2014) in his study conducted on primary school students; proved that learning through Experiential Learning strategies can help in better attainment of spatial geometry skills than learning through traditional learning method. Efstratia (2014) asserted that experiential learning, particularly in project-based learning, enabled students to forge a link between academic knowledge and real-world situations.

Learners retain information most effectively when it is integrated into real-world activities, experiential learning, and natural, spatial memory (University of Kansas). Experiential learning can help the learners to realize the value of the subject. Experiential learning reduces the disparity between goals and methods, as well as between obtaining knowledge and putting it into practice, which are typical of traditional classroom learning (Hamilton, S. F. 1980).

From literature review and as per the access and knowledge of the investigator, it has been found that most of the studies have been conducted on teaching-learning of science, mathematics, language and business. Fewer studies have been conducted on social science subjects. However, it is obvious that, social science teachers need to work very hard to make the different topics of the subject interesting to the students. Because, many students perceive social studies as monotonous and uninteresting (Chiodo & Byford, 2006; Russel and Waters, 2010). Additionally, they lack the perception of the significance of social studies in relation to their daily

experiences (Schug, Todd & Beery, 1982; Shaughnessy & Haladyna, 1985; Russel and Waters, 2010).

People also have the perception of social sciences as a non-utility subject and having less career options for students specializing in the social sciences (NCF 2005). However, social sciences are as important as the natural or physical sciences to adjust in the rapidly changing and interdependent world. To change the concept or the belief that social sciences only transmit information and are text centered, importance should be given on conceptual understanding and practicability. The teaching method of social sciences must promote active participation, creativity, problem solving capacity and critical thinking among the learners. The National Council for The Social Studies (NCSS) Task Force on Early Childhood/Elementary Social Studies (2009) said that teaching and learning elementary social studies should be meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging and active. Learning is best accomplished when the learning activity is connected directly to physical experience.

Again, studies conducted by Poonam, K. & Neetu, K. (2014), Muralidharan, K. & Sundararaman, V. (2013) and Singh, R. & Sarkar, S. (2012) stated that most of the government schools use traditional teaching methods along with less use of technology. Private schools also use traditional teaching methods but with the use of technology and more activities.

Lack of innovative teaching-learning methods, minimum or no use of technology in teaching-learning, lack of students' engagement and experiential activities in classrooms leads to lower interest, motivation and learning outcome in the students.

Thus, it is high time to use Experiential learning methods in schools to enhance students' performance. That is why; government of India has taken initiatives such as Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan (RAA, 2015) and Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) by NITI Ayog in 2016. Realizing the significance of experiential learning, in 2010 UNESCO recommended experiential learning as one of the teaching strategies for 21st century, so as to help the learners in the preparation for facing for 21st century challenges. Another initiative has been taken by Sri Aurobindo Society that is "Inovative Pathshala" which aims to act as guide for experiential teaching in government schools by converting the school syllabus into evolving experiential learning content.

The CBSE (Central Board of Secondary Education) has also made Experiential Learning a requirement for schools and the annual theme for training. This is to

enhance the effectiveness of learning in the 21st century by making it more experiential. In September 2018, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) issued the Curriculum on Experiential Learning-Gandhiji's Nai Talim in 13 languages of India. The objective was to offer experiential learning at all levels of education, encompassing all states and stakeholders.

Also, the National Education Policy (NEP) of 2020 states, "In all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, storytelling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects." Thus, experiential learning is getting significant importance for all the good reasons.

The aforementioned discussion has yielded the following points-

- **Lack of research in the field of social science education-** Although there have been many studies showing the efficacy of experiential learning in fields such as physics, mathematics, and language, there is a clear lack of research specifically examining its impact on social science education. There is a common perception that social science is not very interesting, so it is important to investigate how experiential learning might be used to improve students' interest and performance in this field.
- **Pedagogical innovation in the Social Sciences** - The social sciences have a reputation for being dull and uninteresting due to the prevalence of outdated pedagogical practices. Hence, it is needed to determine whether and how students' perceptions of social science may be improved through the implementation of experiential learning strategies.
- **Exploration of student interest and achievement:** Although the government and different organizations have been taking various steps and initiatives for integrating experiential learning in teaching-learning, the effectiveness of experiential learning methods in terms of student's achievement and students' interest is less explored, especially in social science subject in elementary level.
- **Contribution to educational policy and practice:** This research can provide valuable insights into the implementation of experiential learning in social science subject, as various policies emphasize experiential learning across all subjects. In order to better accommodate the requirements of 21st-century

learners, the results could be used to inform educational policies and teaching practices.

- **Promoting critical thinking and problem-solving:** Social science is essential for cultivating skills in critical thinking, problem-solving, and comprehending societal matters. This research is needed to know how experiential learning can improve these skills in students, thereby making social science instruction more effective and in line with the objectives of holistic education.
- **Aligning with national and international educational goals:** This study is in line with the objectives of both national initiatives, such as NEP 2020, and international guidelines, such as those from UNESCO, which promote experiential learning. The research can offer empirical evidence to support these policies, so ensuring their efficient implementation in classrooms.

Therefore, lack of research in the field of social science education, pedagogical innovation in the Social Sciences, exploration of student interest and achievement, this study's contribution to educational policy and practice, promoting of critical thinking and problem-solving, and alignment of the study's objectives with national and international educational goals have prompted the researcher to carry out this study.

1.9 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study has been stated as "Effectiveness of Experiential Learning Approach in Social Science in terms of Achievement and Reaction of Upper Primary Students of Assam".

1.10 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS USED

Experiential learning approach: Experiential learning approach refers to various methods and activities used to teach social science which are- observations, discussion, projects, field visits, role play, drama, learning through examples, survey, debates, map making, storytelling and storyboarding etc.

Upper primary: Upper primary students refer to the students of class VIII in government schools of Assam.

Social Science: Social Science refers to the social science textbook of the upper primary level, where the contents are drawn from History, Economics, Geography, and Political Science.

Achievement: Achievement refers to the student's performance in achievement test prepared by the researcher.

Reaction: Reaction refers to students' feedback towards the experiential learning teaching methods used by the researcher.

1.11 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To compare the mean scores of achievement in Social Science of Experimental group and Control group students at Pre-test and Post-test stages.
2. To compare adjusted mean scores of achievement test in Social Science of students belonging to Experimental group and Control group by considering pre-achievement in Social Science as the covariate.
3. To compare adjusted mean scores of achievement test in Social Science of students belonging to Experimental group and Control Group by considering Intelligence as the covariate.
4. To study the effect of Treatment, Gender and their interaction on achievement in Social Science by considering pre-achievement in Social Science and intelligence as covariate.
5. To study the effect of Treatment, Intelligence and their interactions on achievement in Social Science considering pre-achievement in Social Science as covariate.
6. To study the effect of Treatment, Study habits and their interactions on achievement in Social Science by considering pre-achievement in Social Science as covariate.
7. To study the reaction of students belonging to Experimental group towards the Experiential Learning Approach used by the researcher.

1.12 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

Ho1. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of achievement in Social Science of Experimental group and Control group students at Pre-test stage.

Ho2. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of achievement in Social Science of Experimental group and Control group students at Post-test stage.

Ho3. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of achievement in Social Science of Experimental group and Control group by considering pre-achievement in Social Science as the covariate.

Ho 4. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of achievement in Social Science of Experimental group and Control group by considering Intelligence as the covariate.

Ho 5. There is no significant difference between the mean scores of achievement in Social Science of Experimental group and Control group by considering pre-achievement in social science and Intelligence as covariate.

Ho 6. There is no significant effect of Gender on achievement in Social Science by considering pre-achievement in Social Science and Intelligence as covariates.

Ho 7. There is no significant effect of Treatment, Gender and their interaction on achievement in Social Science by considering pre-achievement in Social Science as covariate.

Ho 8. There is no significant effect of Intelligence on achievement in Social Science by considering in pre-achievement as covariate.

Ho 9. There is no significant effect of Treatment, intelligence and their interaction on achievement in Social Science by considering pre-achievement in social science as covariate.

Ho 10. There is no significant effect of Study habits on achievement in Social Science by considering in pre-achievement in Social Science as covariate.

Ho 11. There is no significant effect of Treatment, Study habits and their interaction on achievement in Social Science by considering pre-achievement in Social Science as covariate.

1.13 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- i) The study is delimited to the students of class VIII only.
- ii) The study is delimited to social science subject only.

- iii) The study is delimited to the government Assamese medium school only.
- iv) The study is delimited to the Sonitpur district of Assam only.

1.14 ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

The study consists of six chapters, which are listed below:

Chapter I provides an overview of the study, with an emphasis on concept, theoretical background and genesis of experiential learning, rationale of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, hypotheses, and delimitation of the study.

Chapter II provides a comprehensive analysis of the literature that has been studied to strengthen the research problem.

Chapter III presents a comprehensive explanation of the methodology employed in the study, encompassing the research design, sample selection, variable selection and development of tool.

Chapter IV covers the analysis and interpretation of data, along with the findings in relation to different objectives and hypotheses.

Chapter V includes overall outcomes of the study, outcomes of prior studies that corroborate the current study's findings, educational implications of the present study, limitations of the present study, recommendation for future research and conclusion.

And the last chapter, that is, **Chapter VI** deals with the summary and conclusion of the study.

At the end of the study, a bibliography and appendices are given.