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Managing Experiential Activities for Primary School Students: A Literature Review in The Current Context of Educational Reform in Vietnam

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to systematize theoretical foundations, identify research gaps, and propose directions for further studies on experiential activity management in primary schools by applying theoretical methods. The findings indicate that most previous research has focused on the roles, contents, and forms of experiential activities, while research on the comprehensive management of these activities remains limited. The study suggests developing a more comprehensive and systematic management process for experiential activities in primary schools. At the same time, it also proposes strengthening digital technology applied and developing a competency framework to organize experiential activities at the school level, which would improve quality and efficiency of these activities in the current context of educational reform in Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, experiential activities have become an integral part of primary education, providing students with opportunities to connect classroom knowledge with real-life situations (Nguyen, 2024). They are recognized as essential strategies for developing 21st-century competencies (Ananiadou & Claro, 2009). In Vietnam, this approach is emphasized in the 2018 General Education Program, which designates it as a compulsory component that drives educational reform (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). Previous research has demonstrated the role and impact of experiential activities on students' learning improvement. These research works emphasized the positive impacts of experiential activities on motivation, communication and collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, and personal development (Ranken at el., 2024). Especially, scholars have indicated an active connection between classroom knowledge and practical application, thereby enabling primary school students to develop both cognitive and social-emotional competencies (Waite, 2011; James & Williams, 2017).

Under the current educational reforms in Vietnam, experiential activities have been recognized as essential components. However, in primary schools, the use of digital technology in the process of organizing these activities has not been fully exploited. For example, the integration of online learning, project-based learning, and personalized learning has rarely been implemented. Notably, technology application, particularly augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), in experiential activities enhances primary school students' engagement, interest, and learning outcomes. At the same time, it promotes their interaction with scientific knowledge (Chen et al., 2025). Research on competency frameworks for experiential activities has primarily focused on teachers and students (Nguyen, 2024; Duong & Nguyen, 2023), whereas the development of frameworks for evaluating schools' capacity to organize such activities has received little attention. Building a framework for assessing school capacity to organize experiential activities is essential to ensuring that these activities are implemented systematically and effectively, and that they genuinely contribute to the development of students' qualities and competencies.

Regarding managing experiential activities for primary school students, many studies have emphasized the important role of these activities in developing students' qualities and competencies. The studies clearly described on roles, content, methods, and organizational forms of these activities. However, most of them mainly focus on organizing the activities or evaluating their pedagogical effectiveness, whereas comprehensive studies on the full management process of experiential activities remain limited. For example, a lack of consideration of essential resources before the planning experiential activities has led to the ineffective results for these activities (Huynh, 2024). The processes of assessment and collecting feedback from all stakeholders in experiential activities have not received much attention (Thieu, 2024). Therefore, before planning an experiential activity, it is necessary to assess the available resources. At the same time, after organizing experiential activities, schools should evaluate them and draw lessons for future experiential activities.

To address the gaps mentioned above, this study aims to conduct a systematic review of the management of experiential activities for primary school students. By synthesizing, analyzing, and classifying relevant works, the study suggests developing a theoretical framework for the systematic and comprehensive management process of experiential activities in primary schools. Concurrently, it also proposes applying digital technology and developing a competency framework for the organization of experiential activities at the school level to enhance the quality of these activities under the educational reform in Vietnam.

This study contributes to theoretical insights into managing experiential activities in primary schools and provides realistic direction for school leaders, policymakers, and teachers in organizing experiential activities in accordance with school capacities and the local context, aiming to improve the quality of these activities. The findings also offer guidance for further research on managing experiential activities for primary school students in the current context of Vietnam.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This is a review study, which implemented three approaches as follows. (1) Systematic and structural approach: This approach provides a comprehensive overview of the research subject by analyzing key management functions such as planning, organizing, directing, and evaluating in managing experiential activities to ensure optimal educational outcomes. At the same time, this approach enables the identification of strengths and limitations, as well as proposals for applying innovative solutions to the management of experiential activities through a comprehensive literature review. (2) Historical approach: This approach reviews the literature on the formation and development of experiential activity management in primary education throughout different historical stages, synthesizes previous research and clarifies changes in perspectives, content, methods, and management processes. It also identifies gaps that need further research in the context of current educational reforms. (3) Practical approach: This approach emphasizes the connection between theory and current educational reform practices, applying theoretical foundations and research findings to the management of experiential activities in primary school. It evaluates the feasibility of implementing management processes, methods, and strategies in specific contexts to enhance the effectiveness of experiential activities in primary schools.

To ensure accuracy and clarity, the literature-based data was selected based on relevance, publication quality, and practical applicability, prioritizing recent studies. Sources were coded by research theme, management function, and educational level, with reliability evaluated based on citation indexes and the credibility of authors or institutions.

Accordingly, the following steps were executed: (1) Identifying the research scope and objectives, with particular emphasis on the management of experiential activities for primary school students. (2) Collecting relevant materials, including books, scientific articles, theses, research projects, the Vietnamese government guidelines from both national and international sources. (3) Selecting and coding materials based on relevance, quality, and applicability, then categorizing them according to the content of experiential activities and the management of these activities. (4) Synthesizing research findings to identify unexplored issues, strengths, limitations, and trends, especially regarding the application of theories, models, and management strategies for experiential activities in the context of educational reform. (5) Drawing conclusions and developing an effective proposal management process for experiential activities in primary schools, as well as suggesting directions for future research.

The review process was basically guided by the following research questions:

1. How are experiential activities for primary school students understood and implemented?

2. How has past research addressed the management of experiential activities for primary school students?

3. What research gaps and future research directions can be identified in managing experiential activities for primary school students in the current context of Vietnam?

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results on Experiential Activities for Primary School Students

Experiential education is widely recognized as an innovative strategy for developing learners' knowledge, skills, and personal qualities. This philosophy originates from John Dewey's perspective, in which experience is considered not only a learning outcome but also a driver of personal development (Dewey, 1938). His view provides the foundation for organizing activities that engage students in real-life, socially meaningful situations. Building on Dewey and Kolb (1984) proposed the experiential learning model consisting of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, which offers a framework for understanding how learners process experience (Luckner & Nadler, 1992). This model is both theoretically valuable and practically effective, particularly for primary school students who learn best through visual, hands-on, and exploratory approaches, as it systematically links theory with practice across primary, secondary, and vocational education.

Other research has also indicated that experiential education helps students develop key 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and emotional management (Smith & Knapp, 2006). Regarding the role, significance, and positive impact of experiential activities on primary school students, Cheng et al. (2024) affirmed that participation in a series of learning activities, including counseling, discussion, practice, and experiential sessions in science, helps students regulate positive emotions, increase motivation and engagement; develop self-awareness and personal direction; and encourage interest and passion in STEM. This is an integrated teaching approach that provides students with opportunities to apply knowledge and skills in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics to develop competencies, personal qualities, and to effectively solve real-world issues (Ministry of Education and Training, 2023). Developing qualities, competencies, and the ability to effectively solve real-life problems is the goal of organizing experiential activities in primary schools. To achieve this goal, the content and methods of these activities must be continuously updated to integrate digital technology and promote active engagement of primary school students in the context of ongoing educational reform and digital transformation. In the work "*Pocket Game Jams: A Constructionist Approach at Schools*", Petri et al. (2018) suggested that the constructionist approach focuses more on the development of personal experience rather than merely on the acquiring information. This approach is integrated into the curriculum to help students create games with Pocket Code and collaborate in Pocket Game Jams, thereby encouraging active, experiential learning and creativity. Experiential activities that integrate game design foster learning through play and promote creativity, critical thinking, and independent problem-solving among students. It suggests that designing the curriculum and organizing experiential activities for primary school students should be based on the principle of learning by doing and on real-world experiences suited to learners' needs. In addition to creating game content, students also develop digital skills, which are among the currently defined areas of digital competence in education and training (Ministry of Education and Training, 2025). This also aims at organizing experiential learning in the digital environment in primary schools, helping to expand the learning space through simulations, virtual experiments, blended learning, project-based learning, and adaptive learning. It not only enhances student participation, collaboration, and personalization, but also integrates practical problem-solving with technology, thereby developing digital competencies for primary school students as essential skills for the 21st century. At the same time, this model creates new educational spaces and methods beyond the limits of the traditional classroom, supporting primary schools in implementing and evaluating the effectiveness of experiential activities in the current context of educational reform in Vietnam. Regarding the study "*Impact*

of interactive science workshops participation on primary school children's emotions and attitudes towards science", Muñoz-Losa and Corbacho-Cuello (2025) found that interactive science workshops enhance primary students' interest, positive emotions, and attitudes toward science. They suggested that teachers integrate hands-on, interactive activities into lessons to increase student engagement and learning motivation. To encourage creativity in primary school students, teachers need to organize a variety of experiential activities such as clubs, games, forums, competitions, field trips, each of which demonstrates specific educational value (Wait, 2011; Bui, 2015). The above studies have demonstrated that the content, methods, and organizational forms of experiential activities for primary school students play a crucial role in developing learners' qualities and competencies. In addition to renewing the content, methods, and forms of organization, it is essential to create a scientific environment where teachers can design experiential activities and provide a safe space for students' creative exploration. On the study "*Ability to organize experiential activities of teachers in primary schools*", Nguyen (2024) argued that teachers need to improve and focus on context analysis, set clear objectives, and skillfully design experiential activities with assessment tools appropriate to their students' age. Emphasizing the importance of the environment in organizing experiential activities, in the work *"School-based experiential outdoor education: A neglected necessity"*, James and Williams (2017) emphasized that learning environments and organizational spaces in local communities, such as parks, museums, and public areas, are considered "experiential classrooms" that provide students with opportunities for holistic development, from social skills to cognitive abilities and learning motivation.

In Vietnam, experiential activities have officially become a compulsory subject in the new general education program (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018), identified as one of the core elements in the orientation of comprehensive educational reform. In the work *"Organizing experiential activities in primary schools"*, Pho and Vu (2018) argued that experiential activities are an educational approach that integrates theory and practice, helping students develop comprehensively by applying knowledge, life skills, and personal qualities through activities connected to daily life and the psychophysiological characteristics of primary school students. To design and organize experiential activities effectively, Le and Kim (2020) suggested a five-stage framework: (1) Identifying the theme, (2) Setting objectives, (3) Defining content, (4) Designing activities, and (5) Conducting the activities. The fifth stage includes five implementation steps: (a) Assigning tasks to students; (b) Organizing students to participate in specific experiences; (c) Guiding students to analyze and generalize their experience; (d) Applying knowledge in new situations; (e) Evaluating experiential activities. These stages serve as a basic guideline for managers and teachers in organizing experiential activities for students. However, they do not address the analysis of resources required for such activities. Therefore, before setting the objectives of experiential activities, it is important to consider supporting resources to ensure that these activities are effective, promote students' active learning, and contribute to the development of their qualities and competencies. In the analysis *"Factors affecting the competence in organizing experiential activities of primary education students"*, Le (2025) identified three factors that influence students' competence in organizing experiential activities: (1) Students' initiative and engagement; (2) The learning environment, and (3) Teacher guidance. In addition to considering these influencing factors, it is essential to establish methods for assessing students' experiential learning outcomes. On *"Developing competency assessment standards for primary school students' experiential activities according to the 2018 General Education Program"*, Bui et al. (2023) proposed a six-step process for developing such standards: (1) Identifying the competencies to be assessed; (2) Determining the component competencies; (3) Specifying the observable behaviors of each component competency; (4) Identifying the relationship between the

required outcomes and the component competency behaviors; (5) Developing appropriate competency assessment levels corresponding to the required outcomes; and (6) Testing and refining the assessment standards. This provides guidance for primary schools in designing competency assessment standards for experiential activities adapted to regional and local contexts. These standards help students evaluate and develop themselves, while providing teachers with feedback to enhance experiential activities effectively.

Overall, both domestic and international studies emphasize that experiential activities play a crucial role in forming and developing the qualities and competencies of primary school students. However, most studies focus only on organizing experiential activities or evaluating their pedagogical effectiveness, while in-depth research on managing experiential activities in primary schools, especially in local regions, remains limited.

3.2. Research Results on Managing Experiential Activities for Primary School Students

The task of managing experiential activities for primary school students is a relatively new research field, attracting significant attention in the context of comprehensive educational reform in Vietnam, with a focus on developing students' qualities and competencies (Ministry of Education and Training, 2018). Theoretically, experiential learning theories, particularly those of Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984), imply essential requirements for educational management, as summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 1. Relevant Theories and Managerial Implications for Primary Schools

Theoretical framework	Educational management requirements	Implications for the management of experiential activities
Dewey(1938) Experiential Education philosophy	Create supportive learning environments; provide resources effectively; organize activities based on real-life experience	Provide conditions, space, and resources for primary students to participate in meaningful, practical activities
Kolb (1984) Experiential learning model	Set up processes for experiential learning stages; monitor and evaluate student learning	Build environments, guide and coordinate experiential activities; supervise and assess outcomes

These theoretical foundations emphasize that effective management of experiential activities requires schools to create supportive environments, organize activities based on real experiences, provide resources, and establish processes that allow students to experience, reflect, conceptualize, and apply knowledge. Thus, experiential learning theories not only guide teaching but also set practical managerial requirements related to planning, coordination, resource use, monitoring, and evaluation in schools.

International studies highlight several key elements of effective management. According to Bush (2020), educational management is not only limited to carrying out managerial functions, but also involves developing and creating a supportive educational environment appropriate to students' age characteristics. He argued that several management models, such as the collegial model, the political model, the cultural model, and the situational model, each of which is suitable for different contexts, can be applied depending on the situation. The models proposed by Bush can be applied flexibly to the management of experiential activities in primary schools, as follows: (1) Ensuring cooperation and sharing among teachers and relevant stakeholders. (2) Overseeing the establishment of strong

relationships with the community, social organizations, and enterprises. (3) Promoting the development of a school culture that emphasizes experiential and creative activities. (4) Managing change by revising the methods of experiential activities according to local conditions, school capacity, and students' learning requirements. In the work "*Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*", Kolb (1984) argued that developing the experiential learning model also indirectly imposes requirements on management to create suitable conditions, environments, and organizational processes, so that students can engage in experiences, reflect on them, and apply their acquired knowledge to new situations. Based on Kolb's model, each manager and teacher can plan, organize, and evaluate experiential activities that are appropriate to the needs and abilities of primary school students. In the book "*School, family, and community partnerships: your handbook for action"*, Epstein et al. (2019) claimed that establishing collaborative relationships among schools, parents, and the community plays a key role in student education. They proposed six types of involvement (Parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with community) and emphasized that implementing strategic steps, such as assessing barriers, building trust, and fostering mutual respect, enables effective collaboration among stakeholders, thereby enhancing students' learning outcomes and experiential development. In the monograph "*Nurturing global citizens through experiential learning",* Yusupov, I., & Ahmedova, F. (2013) argued that experiential learning organizes practical activities, projects, and real-world experiences to help students develop skills, knowledge, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, collaboration, and a proactive attitude, while fostering global citizenship qualities. Effective implementation requires close collaboration among teachers, students, families, and the community. The above studies indicate that effective management of experiential activities for primary school students requires implementing several essential elements: (1) Planning programs, projects, and practical activities clearly and appropriately according to students' abilities and needs. (2) Integrating the development of knowledge, social skills, responsibility, and communication. (3) Identifying and addressing challenges related to facilities or stakeholders' capacities. (4) Encouraging exchange, respect, and appreciation of each stakeholder's knowledge and experience for effective collaboration. (5) Monitoring, evaluating, and adjusting activities to enhance students' learning outcomes and experiences.

In Vietnam, managing experiential activities for primary school students in the curent context is considered an essential and effective pedagogical approach, widely recognized by many educators. In *"Overview of research on experiential activity management under the competency-based approach for primary school students in Vietnam,"* Huynh (2024) claimed that current studies mainly focus on content, methods, and organizational approaches in localities, while competency-based management of experiential activities for primary school students in the Mekong Delta, as well as the use of quantitative reference frameworks for assessment aligned with regional socio-cultural characteristics, has received limited attention in the literature. In the study *"The current situation of managing experiential learning activities for primary school students in Hoai Duc district, Hanoi city under the 2018 general education program"*, Nguyen and Nguyen (2023) indicated that school managers sometimes face difficulties in planning the implementation of experiential learning objectives, due to a lack of coordination among relevant internal and external stakeholders. Moreover, teachers' initiative and creativity in organizing experiential activities remain limited, and the monitoring and evaluation of these activities are often formalistic, with evaluation criteria that are general and unclear. On *"The current situation of managing experiential learning activities for primary school students in Can Duoc District, Long An Province",* Doan (2024) stated that primary schools in the local area have benefited from investments in infrastructure and the

development of school managers and teachers, enhancing both the quality of education and the management of experiential learning activities for students. These activities are offered in varied forms, supporting skill development, teamwork, and a positive learning environment. However, some managers, teachers, and parents of students do not fully appreciate their importance. The activities can be unengaging, funding is limited, and evaluation is often inadequate, which limits the effectiveness of these activities in the context of comprehensive educational reform. On *"Experiential Learning Management"*, Nguyen (2020) analyzed the theoretical framework underlying the core principles of experiential learning, describing it as an approach that links theory with practice and helps students solve real-world problems through the involvement of relevant stakeholders. Based on this, the study identified criteria for managing experiential learning in three stages: (1) Planning; (2) Leading and organizing the implementation of the plan; and (3) Controlling, evaluating outcomes, and providing feedback to improve the management process of experiential learning. However, the management of these activities in primary schools still faces many challenges and limitations in local contexts. To manage experiential learning effectively and with high quality, in-depth research on the current situation and the proposal of appropriate solutions for specific regions and localities is necessary.

3.3. Discussion

Based on the synthesized findings presented above, the results are interpreted in relation to the Vietnamese educational context and current literature. This analysis aims to clarify how contextual conditions influence the management of experiential activities in primary schools and to highlight the implications that are identified from these insights. The review shows that although experiential activities are widely acknowledged for their pedagogical benefits, the management of these activities, particularly in Vietnam, remains constrained by several contextual challenges. These include differences in infrastructure across regions, unequal teacher capacity in designing and evaluating experiential activities, and varying levels of engagement from parents and local communities.

In the Vietnamese context, regional inequalities, especially between urban, rural, and mountainous areas, limit opportunities to implement diverse and high-quality experiential activities. Teacher competencies also show variation significantly, which becomes more evident under increasing demands for pedagogical innovation and digital technology integration. Additionally, the participation of families and communities depends primarily on local socio-economic conditions, resulting in variable support for experiential activities. These contextual conditions highlight the need for a flexible, region-responsive management approach that complements the systematic processes identified in the literature, including planning, coordination, resource allocation, monitoring, and evaluation. Strengthening infrastructure investment, enhancing teacher professional development, and expanding school, community partnerships are essential to improving the both feasibility and overall effectiveness of experiential activity management in primary schools.

Reviewing the relevant literature as seen above, this study analyzed, evaluated, and identified the research gaps and proposed the following directions for further research:

First, in primary schools, experiential learning methods with digital technology have not been effectively applied (Nguyen et al, 2024). The integration of online learning through blended learning; project-based learning, and adaptive learning remains limited (Le & Tran, 2024). These modern teaching methods require teachers and students in primary schools to become more familiar with technological advantages and their impact on students' behavior and academic outcomes (Alessa & Hussein, 2023). Digital-based experiential learning helps primary schools develop and evaluate experiential activities in digital environments, while

opening up new learning spaces and educational methods (Salinas-Navarro et al., 2023). This gap highlights the need for research on management solutions to strengthen the applications of digital technology in experiential activities, in response to the current demands of educational reform and digital transformation.

Second, research on competency frameworks for experiential activities has mainly focused on teachers and students, while school-level frameworks related to management and leadership have received little attention. Without such a framework, activities tend to be fragmented, lack common standards, are difficult to evaluate, and less effective. However, a school-level framework facilitates better management and supports coordinated development for teachers and students. This highlights the need to develop a competency framework at the school level to promote high-quality experiential learning in the current context of educational reforms in Vietnam.

Third, many studies have emphasized the important role of experiential activities in developing primary students' qualities and competencies. These studies have clearly described the roles, content, methods, and forms of organizing experiential activities for primary school students. However, most previous studies focused on organizing experiential activities or assessing their pedagogical effectiveness, while in-depth research on the comprehensive management process of these activities remains limited. Systematic studies addressing all stages of the management process include: (1) Resource assessment, (2) Planning, (3) Organization and coordination, (4) Direction, (5) Monitoring and evaluation, and (6) Review and improvement. This gap emphasizes the need for comprehensive, context-sensitive management process of experiential activities in Vietnam, where schools face diverse local conditions and organizational capacities. Such a process is essential to improve the quality and effectiveness of these activities. The management process of experiential activities is shown in Figure 1:

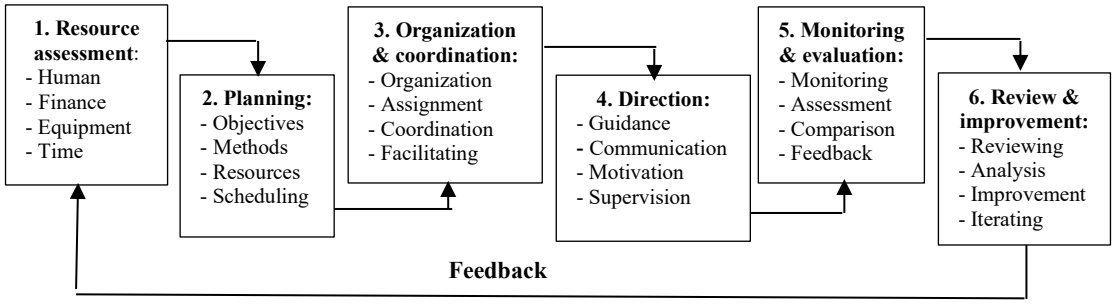

Figure 1. The management process of experiential activities

4. CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Managing experiential activities in primary schools plays an important role in enhancing students' qualities and competencies, as well as contributing to breakthrough in education and training development (Central Committee of the Communist Party of Vietnam, 2025). Based on the reviewed results presented above, research works have emphasized the important role of these activities under the 2018 General Education Program. Experiential activities are most effective when learning is combined with practice, theory is integrated with real-life applications, and schools maintain strong connections with the community. The review also highlights three essential directions for further research: (1) strengthening the application of digital technology in experiential activities; (2) developing a competency framework for the organization of experiential activities at the school level in order to enhance the quality of

experiential learning; and (3) designing a comprehensive, context-sensitive management process for experiential activities. Continuous innovation in managing experiential activities is essential for improving students' experiential learning outcomes and for achieving the goals of organizing these activities in the current context of educational reform in Vietnam.

This study offers both theoretical and practical insights into managing experiential activities in Vietnamese primary schools within the context of educational reform. Key contributions include: (1) a systematic management framework covering planning, organization, coordination, monitoring, and evaluation; (2) an integrated approach linking educational management theory with experiential learning theory; and (3) consideration of contextual factors such as regional diversity and teacher capacity. These findings provide guidance for policy development, school leadership, and the effective implementation of experiential programs, offering practical directions to enhance the quality and impact of experiential learning.

Although this study focuses on the literature review and the context of Vietnamese primary schools, it provides a valuable overview of current practices and challenges in managing experiential activities. Future research could be extended to other regions and incorporate practical data from different stakeholders to enhance generalizability.

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