

## Designing And Implementing Immersive Experiential Learning: The Case Of Manthan –Social Immersion

**Giribala Dewasthale**

Professor, DES' J S Kothari Business School

Email:ID: giribala.dewasthale@despune.org

### ABSTRACT

The present paper analyses the design and implementation of a learning experience at a Mumbai based business school through the prism of action learning, immersive experience and experiential learning. The paper uses the case study method for analyzing the design and implementation of the learning experience; followed by the survey method employing The Experiencing Scale as proposed by Stock and Kolb (2020) to investigate student engagement with the learning experience across the dimensions of presence, embodiment, and novelty. The results indicate that a majority of students demonstrated high levels of presence (60–70%), suggesting that the learning experience effectively captured students' attention and engaged them. Qualitative analysis reveals key learning outcomes including enhanced empathy, civic consciousness, interpersonal skills, and a deeper understanding of social realities. However, limitations were observed in sustaining novelty and achieving full embodied immersion, partly due to constrained duration and repetitive exposure. The study contributes to management education literature by demonstrating that authentic, socially embedded immersive experiences can effectively complement traditional pedagogies in developing socially responsible future managers. It also proposes a replicable model for integrating NGO partnerships and guided reflection into business school curricula

**Keywords:** Experiential Learning, Immersive experience, Action Learning, Student Engagement, Management Education

### INTRODUCTION:

"I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand", thus spoke Confucious, the Chinese philosopher. In much the same vein the ancient Greek dramatist Sophocles wrote: "One must learn by doing the thing, for though you think you know it-you have no certainty, until you try." Closer home in ancient India, the Gurukul system embodied personalized, holistic learning through rigorous debate, discussion and application.

The study and practice of business management is applied in nature. Business organisations are designed to deploy resources in the form of human skills, money and materials to achieve objectives that are largely economic in nature, but increasingly also include a social dimension. Business organisations cannot be insulated from the society in which they exist. They cannot function as islands. The World Economic Forum in its Future of Jobs report 2025 predicts that empathy will be one of the most demanded skills by the end of the decade.

Management institutes prepare students for a career in business management. As future managers, students must thoughtfully navigate human resources belonging to different social and cultural environments. Business schools offer different pedagogical options for students—combining cognitive learning through classroom sessions with on the job training in summer projects, and other activities.

The present paper analyses the design and implementation of a learning experience at a Mumbai based business school through the prism of action learning, immersive experience and experiential learning.

### LITERATURE REVIEW:

Action learning involves working in teams on real issues. Learning is thought to happen through reflection with team members. An action learning situation comprises an objective on which team members implement actions, reflect and learn. An action learning situation has a sponsor who may define the objective and evaluate the outcome. The action learning team has a mentor or coach who facilitates the process of implementation and reflection.

Experiences have become the next frontier in delivery of economic value. Beyond the benefits provided by features of products and services, businesses today are creating value through staged experiences. Experiences create sensations that address customers at a physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual level. Experiences may be viewed through two dimensions – extent of customer participation (passive or active) and customer connection with the experiential event – whether customers are outside the event absorbing it or they are inside the event immersed in it. Accordingly, Pine and Gilmore (1998) suggest four realms of an experience. In entertaining experiences customers participate passively absorbing it from the outside, in educational experiences they participate actively. Likewise, customers may be passively immersed in an aesthetic experiential event such as visiting an art gallery or a heritage site. Or they may be actively immersed in an escapist experiential event such as going for a trek. Increasingly educational and other organisations are creating immersive experiences to differentiate their offerings and create superior value.

The AACSB Task Force (1986) has defined experiential learning as: A business curriculum-related endeavor which is interactive and is characterized by variability and uncertainty. In experiential learning, participants are expected to process their knowledge, skills and attitude in a given situation with a high level of active involvement (Hoover and Whitehead, 1975). Experiential learning involves four phases: design, conduct, evaluation and feedback. Design includes specification of learning objectives, and selection of activities for participants. Wolfe and Byrne (1975), emphasise the importance of the design phase as the design must lead to the expected educational outcomes. The conduct and deployment of activities is structured, and monitored. At the conclusion of the activity participants are evaluated wherein they are asked to articulate specific learning from the experience. The objective of experiential learning is to develop the student's inter-personal and non-cognitive skills. Educators hope that through the experience students can get a flavor of the messiness of a true to life context. Faculty members are coaches and mentors who choreograph the experience and ensure its quality. If experience is necessary for learning, then it is vital to measure the experience for the kind of learning it entails. Learning is a relatively permanent change in behavior through acquisition of knowledge, skills and experience and is subject to modification as per the situation. According to Kolb, experiential learning is a recurring cycle of experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting. When educators stage experiential learning they have certain objectives in mind which may be tied to the vision and mission of the institute or the programme's stated educational objectives in terms of the development of skills and attitudes desired in students. However, engaging students in this age of digital distractions is a challenge for educators. Naturally therefore, they want gauge the engagement of students with the experiential learning context. Kolb and Stock suggest three factors to measure students' level of engagement – Presence, Embodiment and Novelty. Presence is the student's engagement level with the learning context through awareness, receptivity and connectedness. Embodiment refers to the student's extent of immersion in the learning experience both physically and emotionally. The novelty or newness of an experiential learning context stimulates curiosity in learners and gets their attention.

### 1. Research Objective:

- To explore and analyse the design and implementation of a learning experience at a Mumbai based business school through the prism of action learning, immersive experience and experiential learning.

### METHODOLOGY:

The paper uses two methods for analyzing the learning experience. The case study method analyses the design and implementation of the learning experience. This is followed by survey method employing The Experiencing Scale as proposed by Stock and Kolb (2020) to investigate student engagement with the learning experience.

An intensive investigation into the learning experience was done using case study method. Following sources of information were used: emails, meeting minutes,

documents, videos, social media communication, and publications. The learning exercise spanned three years 2024, 2025 and 2026 for three consecutive batches of first year Post Graduate Diploma in Management (PGDM) students of the business school.

Using convenience sampling, a survey was conducted to study student engagement with the learning experience through the Experiencing Scale as suggested by Stock and Kolb (2020). Students were contacted through whats app groups and personal messages on whats app. The survey was administered through a google form. The introductory statement to the survey is given in the table that follows:

**Table No.1: Introductory statement for the survey**

“Dear Respondent  
I am investigating learning experience of students. Kindly provide your free, frank and genuine response to the questions below, in the context of your Vasti Visits for Social Immersion. The study is for purely academic purposes and your response will be kept completely confidential. It will in no way impact your academic or other assessment in this or future semesters at. It should take you approximately 5-7 minutes to take this survey. Thank you for your time and cooperation! In case you have any queries please reach out to me at: (name and mobile phone number)”

Respondents comprised students of the business school from the PGDM batches of 2023-25, 2024-26 and 2025-27 who had participated in the learning exercise. Sample details are as follows. In all 145 students from the three batches were contacted. 37 students responded amounting to a response rate of 26%. 45.9% respondents were from the PGDM batch of 2025-27, 24.3% were from the PGDM batch of 24-26 and 29.7% respondents were from the PGDM batch of 2023-25. 51.4% respondents were female and 48.6% respondents were male.

### 2. The Case Study: Manthan- Social Immersion Programme

The Origin: The idea of the learning experience emerged from a member of the managing committee of the institute. He expressed concern that students lead a protected life till their post graduate years and are not adequately exposed to the social realities of India, which are necessary to develop them into thoughtful and sensitive professionals. He suggested collaborating with an NGO to brainstorm how the business school may achieve the objective of sensitizing students to the social realities of India and developing empathy.

#### 5.1 Design and Implementation:

To design and implement the social immersion programme the business school entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with an NGO which worked on various social projects in the slums or vastis of Mumbai towards community health and women empowerment.

Representatives of the institute and NGO met and agreed upon the framework for the exercise. PGDM1 student groups of 5-7 members were mentored by a faculty member. In addition, each group had a mentor and guide from the NGO. Each group was to visit a designated slum area (hereinafter referred to as vasti) in Mumbai for this

exercise.

Students of PGDM batches 2023-25 and 2024-26 were to visit the vastis for data collection using a survey instrument to study the impact of projects implemented by the NGO. The questionnaire for the survey was jointly designed by students, faculty members and NGO representatives. Survey questions were formulated first in English and then translated into Hindi and Marathi – the dominant languages of vastis. Students were advised to record the data using pen and paper or on their mobile phones. They were asked to upload this into a master data base for further analysis. Students were also encouraged to observe and make notes of their vasti visits.

Students were briefed by faculty members and representatives of NGO about behavior and etiquette in vasti. They were advised to dress conservatively and avoid expensive clothes and accessories. Students were advised to be friendly and courteous with vasti residents. Students spent 4 hours every Saturday in the vasti for four Saturdays between September-December each year. Attendance was recorded by faculty members for each visit. Whats app groups were created to communicate. In the initial visit students acquainted themselves with the vasti and its residents. Representatives of the NGO facilitated this. In the second and third visits students completed the data collection exercise for the impact

assessment study. In the fourth and final visit students informed vasti residents about various government schemes and opportunities for livelihood generation.

In the third year of conducting the social immersion programme, that is for the PGDM batch of 2025-27 the business school and NGO experimented with a new template for the learning exercise. Instead of studying the impact of the NGO's projects, students sensitised vasti residents about importance of three issues: Indian heritage, customs and culture; preserving the environment; and civic responsibility. Students were primed that their target groups were women and children. Students worked in groups to prepare and stage street plays, games and quizzes, often using mobile phones, in the vastis. Each group captured their experiences in a digital scrap book.

After each vasti visit the director and faculty members conducted a batch meeting. Students reflected upon their experiences. Groups spent approximately 5-7 minutes each, for unfiltered experience sharing. Faculty members prompted further exploration through questions beginning with 'How' and 'Why'. Students were also encouraged to share best experience of vasti visit and most challenging experience.

Assessment: The assessment format for PGDM batches of 2023-25 and 2024-26 is given in Table2.

**Table No.2: Assessment format PGDM 23-25 and 24-26.**

<p>Students will have to put in 16 hours of fieldwork (Time spent on data analysis and preparing report is excluded from this) and will be assessed for 50 marks. Assessment will include attendance (10marks), report (20 marks) and viva (20 marks). PGDM1 students will participate in this project on Saturdays</p> <p><b>The Report:</b> The report will consist of two parts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Impact assessment study, intervention on giving information to beneficiaries about various government schemes and opportunities for livelihood generation.</li><li>2. Observations while conducting the study:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Beliefs and attitudes of vasti residents about people, objects, situations and events.</li><li>ii. Family: structure, roles, interaction and communication.</li><li>iii. Social groups: Influence of formal and informal groups; communication process.</li><li>iv. Motivation: Analysis by applying motivation theories.</li><li>v. Influence of Cultural factors</li><li>vi. Influence of Income, education and occupation on vasti residents</li><li>vii. What you have learnt from social immersion</li></ol></li></ol> <p>Font: Times New Roman 11; single spacing. Report should not exceed 10 pages.</p> <p><b>The Viva-Voce:</b> Viva will be conducted by external as well as internal assessors on your report. Each student will be required to present on the report for 5 minutes (no ppt) followed by questions from the assessors.</p>
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The assessment format for PGDM batch of 2025-27 is given in Table 3.

**Table No.3: Assessment format PGDM 25-27.**

<p>For Social Immersion student will have to put in 16 hours of fieldwork and will be assessed for 50 marks. Assessment will include attendance (10marks), Scrapbook (digital and hard copy) (20 marks) and viva (20 marks).</p> <p><b>The Scrap book:</b></p> <p>A group of 5 students will be allocated one vasti. Scrapbook must be prepared for vasti allocated to group. The scrapbook must comprise following sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Introduction to Social Immersion 2025: objectives of social immersion, group formation and task allocated to group</li><li>2. Idea Generation, planning, rehearsal of activities, planning vasti visits.</li><li>3. Implementation of ideas in each vasti</li><li>4. Vasti Darshan: Observation about the following in vasti:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>i. Availability of basic amenities; challenges.</li><li>ii. Beliefs and Attitude of residents</li><li>iii. Observations about influence of income, education and occupation on residents</li><li>iv. Observations about social and cultural factors</li></ol></li><li>5. Learnings from Social Immersion: 3 key take-aways.</li></ol>
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Students are encouraged to use storyboards, photos, doodles, clip art, stickers and other decorative elements, etc to embellish their scrapbook. Size of page must be 8.5\*11 inches.  
 Scrapbook should not exceed 10 pages.  
 Marking scheme for scrapbook will be as follows: 1. Content – relevance to 5 points mentioned- language- breadth and depth of content. (10 marks)  
 2. Creativity and presentation: 10 marks  
**The Viva-Voce:** Viva will be conducted by external as well as internal assessors. Each student will be required to present for 5 minutes (no ppt) on their experience of social immersion with reference to the 5 points mentioned for scrapbook. This will be followed by questions from the assessors.  
 Marking scheme for viva will be as follows: 1. Content – relevance to 5 points mentioned- language- breadth and depth of content. (10 marks)  
 2. Presentation style: 10 marks. Students may present in English, Hindi or Marathi.

**3. Case Study Analysis:**

In keeping with the philosophy of action learning, students worked in teams in a real life context. The learning situation had a specific objective to develop sensitivity in students about the social realities of life in India’s slums or vastis. After each vasti visit students were asked to reflect and share their experiences. This was facilitated by the faculty mentors. The learning exercise was jointly sponsored by the management committee of the institute and the representatives of the collaborating NGO. However, the assessment of the exercise was left to the discretion of the faculty team of the institute.

Pine and Gilmore (1998) have suggested four realms of customer experience based on two dimensions: extent of customer participation (active or passive) and extent of customer connection with the event (absorbing it from outside or immersed in the event). Organisations stage events to create value through sensations that address customers at a physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual level. In the case of Manthan- Social Immersion Programme the director, faculty members and NGO staged the immersive learning exercise. Value created through the immersive experience was ‘social’ in nature, not economic. The immersive experience was part of the 2-year full time AICTE approved PGDM programme offered by the business school in Mumbai. The experience was educational in nature wherein students participated actively and connected with the context of social immersion through visits and interaction with residents of Mumbai slums or vastis. In the first two iterations of social immersion for the PGDM Batches of 2023-25 and 2024-26, students gathered data for an impact assessment study. For the PGDM batch of 2025-27 the extent of immersion went a step further as students connected with vasti residents through street plays, games and quizzes to sensitise them about three issues: Indian heritage, customs and culture; preserving the environment; and

civic responsibility.

The Manthan Social Immersion experiential learning exercise fulfils all the conditions as suggested by AACSB task force. The learning exercise was integrated in the curriculum of the PGDM programme at the business school. Students visited Mumbai vastis along with their faculty mentors and representatives of the partnering NGO. Each visit had a broad objective which was to conduct a survey or sensitise residents about Indian heritage and culture, civic responsibility and environment through street plays, quizzes and games. However, the vasti visit was free flowing and not structured leaving room for students to improvise their method/s of interacting with vasti residents. This variability enhanced their social sensitivity and skills such as empathy. To fulfil the aforementioned objectives in the vasti visits students had to apply knowledge and skills acquired in the business management programme including planning, organising, coordination, communication, leadership, team work, data collection and analysis. Faculty mentors supervised and monitored student groups during vasti visits. At the culmination of the exercise students were assessed using a structured format.

**4. Study of Student Engagement with Learning Exercise: Findings and Analysis:**

In the present paper the researcher has attempted to measure students’ engagement level with the Manthan Social Immersion learning experience using the Experiencing Scale as suggested by Stock and Kolb (2020). The findings and analysis are as follows: Student engagement was measured through three factors as suggested by Stock and Kolb (2020): – Presence, Embodiment and Novelty. Twelve items in the scale measured the Presence factor, three items measured the Embodiment factor and three items measured the Novelty factor. Findings are given in Table 4

**Table No.4: Experiencing Scale Responses**

Sr. No	Scale item	Response
<i>Presence</i>		
1.	I actively participated/did not participate	75.7% respondents actively participated during vasti visits.
2.	My senses were engaged/not engaged	62.2% respondents were highly engaged; 21.6% were somewhat engaged in vasti visits.
3.	I was fully present/somewhere else.	64.9% respondents were fully present; 16.2% were somewhat present during vasti visits.
4.	I was in the flow/felt resistant	62.2% respondents were in the flow; 18.9% were somewhat in the flow in vasti visits.

5.	My attention was focused/wandered	54.1% respondents were focused; 24.3% were somewhat focused during vasti visits.
6.	I felt connected and whole/scattered.	51.4% felt connected and whole during vasti visits; 18.9% felt somewhat connected and whole; 10.8% felt neither connected nor scattered; 10.8% felt somewhat scattered, 8.1% felt totally scattered during vasti visits.
7.	I was in the here and now/there and then.	48.6% were in the here and now during vasti visits; 21.6% were somewhat in the here and now; 16.2% were neither here and now nor there and then; 5.4% were somewhat there and then; 8.1% were in there and then.
8.	I responded to what was happening/was on autopilot.	59.5% responded to what was happening during vssti visits; 18.9% somewhat responded to what was happening; 13.5% were somewhat on autopilot in vasti visits.
9.	I was not self-conscious/was self-absorbed.	18.9% were not self-conscious during vasti visits; 16.2% were somewhat self-conscious; 35.1% were neither self-conscious nor self-absorbed; 18.9% were somewhat self-absorbed; 10.8% were self-absorbed during vasti visits.
10.	I didn't notice the passage of time/I was aware of time passing.	43.2% didn't notice the passage of time during vasti visits; 24.3% did somewhat notice the passage of time; 16.2% were neutral towards the passage of time in vasti visits.
11.	I was deeply involved/was uninvolved.	59.5% felt deeply involved in the vasti visits; 21.6% were somewhat involved in the vasti visits; 8.1% were neither involved nor uninvolved; 10.8% were uninvolved during vasti visits.
12.	I was alert and aware/I was easily distracted.	54.1% felt alert and aware during vasti visits; 21.6% felt somewhat alert and aware during vasti visits; 10.8% felt neither alert and aware nor distracted during vasti visits; 5.4% felt somewhat distracted during vasti visits; 8.1% felt easily distracted during vasti visits.
<b>Embodiment</b>		
1.	I felt a sense of oneness with the vasti world/I did not feel a connection with the vasti world.	51.4% felt a sense of oneness with the vasti world; 21.6% somewhat felt a sense of oneness with the vasti world; 10.4% felt neither oneness nor were they disconnected with the vasti world; 10.4% felt somewhat disconnected with the vasti world; 5.4% did not feel a connection with the vasti world.
2.	I felt the experience in my body/I had no bodily sensations.	43.2% felt the experience in their bodies; 13.5% somewhat felt the experience in their bodies; 27% neither felt the experience in their bodies nor were completely devoid of bodily sensations; 13.5% somewhat had no bodily sensations in vasti visits.
3.	The experience was emotional/I had no emotional reactions.	48.6% felt the experience was emotional; 18.9% felt the experience was somewhat emotional; 18.9% were neutral about the role of emotions in their experience; 5.4% felt somewhat low emotional reactions; 8.1% perceived absence of emotions.
<b>Novelty</b>		
1.	I saw things in new ways/my views did not change.	45.9% felt they saw things in new ways during vasti visits; 24.3% felt that they somewhat saw things in new ways; 18.9% were neutral; 2.7% felt somewhat that their views did not change; 8.1% felt that their views did not change in vasti visits.
2.	Each visit was fresh and new/was pretty much what I had expected.	35.1% felt that each vasti visit was fresh and new; 18.9% somewhat felt that each visit was fresh and new; 27% felt that each visit was neither new nor what they had expected; 5.4% felt that each visit was somewhat what they had expected; 13.5% felt that each vasti visit was somewhat what they had expected.
3.	I learnt something new/I didn't learn anything new.	40.5% felt they learnt something new; 29.7% somewhat felt they learnt something new; 13.5% were neutral about whether they learnt anything new 8.1 somewhat felt that they did not learn anything new; 8.1% felt they did not learn anything new.

### 7.1 ANALYSIS:

Presence is thought to be a prerequisite for learning. Significant body of research suggests that active

engagement of the learner leads to greater learning. 60% to 70% of the respondents participated actively, engaged with their senses, were fully present and in the flow. 50-60% of the participants responded to what was happening,

were focused in their attention and felt connected, were deeply involved, alert and aware. The goal of the Manthan- Social Immersion exercise was to expose and sensitise students to the social realities of India to develop them into thoughtful and sensitive management professionals. The exercise was prepared to accommodate the constraints of the curricular framework of PGDM programme and the constraints of time. Students were aware that this was a mandatory exercise with an assessment at its conclusion. This may have influenced responses. Significantly, 58.6% of the respondents were aware of the passage of time during vasti visits, possibly indicating some level of boredom, fatigue or ennui. Embodiment refers to a sense of oneness with the learning context that goes beyond thinking and language. It refers to engaging with the learning context at a sensory and emotional level. This is thought to lead to a deeper level of engagement and learning. While 73% of the respondents felt or somewhat felt a sense of oneness with the vasti world; and 67.5% felt or somewhat felt that the experience was emotional, only 56.7% respondents felt or somewhat felt the vasti visit experience in their bodies. Limited time of engagement of a total engagement period of 16 hours may have been the cause of this.

Novelty in a learning situation helps to get the attention of the learner, generate interest and arouse curiosity. This helps engagement. Results show that while 70.2% felt or somewhat felt they saw things in new ways; and 70.2% of the respondents felt or somewhat felt that they learnt something new; only little over half (54%) felt or somewhat felt that each vasti visit was fresh and new. The response seems to indicate that, building the novelty factor into the learning exercise was a challenge. While it is encouraging that the majority of the respondents engaged deeply with the learning context and felt a sense of oneness and emotional connect with the vasti, less than 60% could connect with the context at a physiological level. Finally, while it is encouraging that over 70% felt they saw things in new ways and learnt something new in vasti visits, less than 60% experienced a sense of freshness in each consecutive vasti visit. In addition to the Experiencing Scale as suggested by Stock and Kolb (2020), respondents were asked to give their answer to the following open ended statement: “Share something about your experience of social immersion in few lines”. Responses were content analysed. The analysis produced seven themes

**Table No. 5: Themes from qualitative data**

Sr. No	Theme	Evidence from data	Interpretation
1.	Experiential learning as distinct from conventional pedagogy	“and the experience was different from classroom learning and gave a practical exposure”; “learn so many things”	Respondents acknowledged the tacit knowledge acquisition, contextual understanding and real-world application of this experiential learning as distinct from conventional pedagogy
2.	Emotional engagement	“It was memorable journey”; “It was really mesmerizing experience”; “My visit to Vasti was an incredible and unforgettable experience”	Responses suggest a deep engagement with the learning context which might be a precursor to influencing long term behavior.
3.	Confronting socio-economic realities	“Seeing people live in a place with such poor hygiene made me pause and reflect”; “small houses, water and electricity problem still smiles on their face teaches us that we can live it”; “It was eye opening, looking at kids struggle at such a small age by helping their families financially and also the kids going through so much mentally”.	Respondents encountered and experienced social inequalities first hand and appear to experience some discomfort. This has also prompted self-reflection. This may lead to challenging earlier assumptions and perspectives.
4.	Recognising community resilience and the importance of social bonds	“People in the Vasti lack money, so they choose to stand with each other at all times. This in a sense proves that people are the real capital”. “During my visit to the vasti, I observed that people there live their lives happily without much complaining. I also noticed a strong sense of trust among the residents, where everyone seems to rely on and support each other”.	Respondents recognize the worth of non-material aspects such as trust, solidarity and resilience that comes from being part of a community. They appear to realise that social bonds are also a safety net, albeit an informal one.
5.	Developing empathy	“Seeing people live in a place with such poor hygiene made me pause and reflect”. “In one vasti, I witnessed two contrasting realities one side was deeply admirable, while the other made me wonder how people could endure such conditions”.	Respondents appear to demonstrate the development of relatedness and an expanded world view. Vasti visits appear to have reduced the social distance between them and vasti residents resulting in social sensitivity.

6.	Developing civic consciousness and responsibility	“This experience helped me understand different aspects of life”. “It was a memorable experience in my life will never ever forget would like to contribute more in the future no doubt about that”.	Responses appear to suggest that students moved from being mere passive observers in the Manthan social immersion learning experience to demonstrating the intent to actively contribute to the social context they were exposed to.
7.	Developing interpersonal skills and ability for self-reflection	“I was constantly learning how to balance being helpful with being relatable”; “this experience taught me how to communicate important ideas effectively”.	Respondents appear to have developed inter-personal skills, adaptability, ability to self-regulate their behavior and self-reflection.

**DISCUSSION:**

The present study aimed to analyse the design and implementation of learning experience—Manthan Social Immersion—through the prism of action learning, immersive experience and experiential learning. The results indicate that a majority of students demonstrated high levels of presence (60–70%), suggesting that the learning experience effectively captured students’ attention and engaged them.

The findings support experiential learning and action learning frameworks in that students engaged in a real world context, reflection was enabled in a structured format after each vasti visit and faculty members played the role of mentors and facilitators. The Manthan Social Immersion learning experience highlights the significance of design, implementation and evaluation in achieving learning objectives.

Measurement of the students’ engagement level with the learning experience suggests significant levels of presence, embodiment and novelty. High level of presence confirms that the learning environment stimulated significant attention and engagement. While emotional engagement was strong, the experience fell short on holistic immersion possibly due to the short duration of engagement (16 hours over 2 months). Finally, though over 70% respondents felt they learnt something new in vasti visits only 54% perceived each vasti visit to be a fresh and new experience. This highlighted a key design challenge in that it is difficult to sustain novelty in repeated immersive experiences.

The seven themes from the qualitative data suggest the value of experiential learning as distinct from conventional pedagogy. The emotional engagement and empathy themes align with World Economic Forum’s future skills demands. Students confronting social realities triggered cognitive dissonance and reflection. Recognising community resilience and the importance of social bonds expanded the students’ world view. The theme of developing civic consciousness and responsibility indicated a movement towards responsible leadership. More importantly, the students developed interpersonal skills and ability for self-reflection.

**5. Contribution to Theory and Practice:**

The present study demonstrates that immersive experiences need not be simulated in offline or online environments but can be implemented in a live socio-cultural context. It contributes to management education literature by integrating action learning, immersive

experience and experiential learning.

**CONTRIBUTION TO PEDAGOGY:**

Manthan Social Immersion provides a replicable model for business schools. It highlights the importance of NGO partnerships, field based exposure and learning through guided reflection.

**LIMITATIONS:**

The researcher acknowledges the following limitations in the design, implementation and evaluation of the learning experience.

The duration of the exercise limited deeper embodiment. The repetitive element in vasti visits reduced novelty in the learning experience. The mandatory participation and assessment pressures may have influenced engagement of students. These are pointers for improving design and implementation in the future.

In the context of evaluating the engagement of students using the Experiencing Scale as suggested by Stock and Kolb (2020), the small sample (37 respondents) and the context of a single institution in Mumbai, India, limits generalizability. Convenience sampling and self-reported engagement denote potential for bias. Finally, the short duration of the learning experience restricts long term impact assessment.

**CONCLUSION:**

This study examined the design and implementation of the Manthan Social Immersion Programme and evaluated student engagement using the Experiencing Scale framework. The study reinforces the argument that business education must extend beyond conventional pedagogy to include socially embedded, experiential contexts. The Manthan programme demonstrates how immersive social exposure can contribute to developing responsible, thoughtful, and empathetic future managers.

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