



PEER LEARNING AS A TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY FOR FOSTERING ENTREPRENEURIAL INTENTION

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Abstract

In an era of rapid economic reforms and escalating demand for innovation driven careers, developing entrepreneurial intention among students has become a major goal of education frameworks worldwide. The peer learning method has achieved prominence as a transformative pedagogical approach that emphasizes shared responsibility, collaboration, and active knowledge construction. The present article discusses the transformative role of peer learning in developing entrepreneurial intention among students. Peer learning experiences encourage social interaction, peer modeling, and scaffolding, which collectively influence peer learners' attitudes toward perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and entrepreneurship. Through experiential activities and collaborative problem-solving, learners develop creativity, self-efficacy, opportunity recognition, leadership skills, and risk-taking ability—key psychological antecedents of entrepreneurial intention. Additionally, peer learning escalates academic engagement by promoting emotional, cognitive, and behavioral involvement in learning tasks, thereby establishing a supportive ecosystem for developing an entrepreneurial mindset. The article highlights how structured peer learning experiences contribute to the development of 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, communication, and collaboration. The article concludes that integrating peer learning strategies systematically within curricula can serve as a powerful instructional strategy for fostering entrepreneurial intention and preparing students to address contemporary socio-economic challenges.

Key Terms: *Entrepreneurial intention, peer learning, 21st-century skills.*

Introduction

Education plays a vital role in the comprehensive development of the individual, society, and state (Schultz, T.W. 1961). In the coming era, India will become a country with the largest number of youngsters. Our country should strive to provide high-quality education for the young generation with multi-disciplinary ability across the arts, humanities, and sciences (NEP2020). With climate change, increasing environmental challenges, and changing workplaces, it has become essential for students to not only learn but also learn how to learn. Today, the innovation-led knowledge economy has considered higher education institutions at the forefront of development (Audretsch, D.B. 2014), demanding a shift beyond conventional “textbook entrepreneurship.” During the last decade, rapid changes and updates that have been taking place in the distinct educational fields of knowledge, science, and technology have made it imperative to strengthen classrooms by incorporating holistic and updated curricula (Fullan, M. 2013). By 2026, Kerala plans to become a model for knowledge economy and inclusive innovation by initiating diverse networks of startups and generating distinct job opportunities (KSUM, 2022). Therefore, this mission involves a transformation in the higher education sector from conventional rote learning experiences to holistic

models (Astin, A.W. 1999) focusing on entrepreneurial intention and academic engagement for the development of work attitude and dynamic skills.

As the state transforms into a dynamic “knowledge economy,” appropriate integration of peer learning experiences has become a focal point in nurturing entrepreneurial intention and academic engagement among its diverse student community. Within the educational framework, peer learning techniques are not merely an educational tool but a “social mechanism” (Topping, K.J. 2005) that bridges the knowledge gap between theoretical knowledge and practical entrepreneurial intention. By nurturing entrepreneurial intention and academic engagement through social support and collaborative practices, the state is planning to empower a generation to lead Kerala’s transformation into a robust knowledge economy. Within this context, peer learning has appeared as a strong learner-centered approach that carries both logical and inspirational outcomes. In the light of current educational reforms in India that emphasize learner-centered teaching, 21st century skills, and entrepreneurship education, (NEP 2020) it is timely and essential to examine the combined impact of academic engagement and peer learning on entrepreneurial intention. A clear understanding of this relationship is essential for instruction that effectively integrates cooperative learning with entrepreneurial development, thereby enhancing academic and career outcomes for students.

Peer learning

Students learn with and from each other by sharing and explaining their ideas and by involving themselves in activities in which they can learn from their peers (Boud, 2001). A peer group is a group of individuals with the same level who collaborate with one another (Falkchikov, 2001). The influence of the peer group usually mounts during adolescence. Mostly, this method is practiced by the teachers in the teaching-learning process, specifically where a constructive learning approach is used. According to Boud, Cohen, and Sampson (2014), “Peer learning emphasizes reciprocity, shared responsibility, and collaborative knowledge construction, rather than passive reception of information.” Similarly, Topping (2005) defines peer learning as “the acquisition of knowledge and skill through active helping and supporting among status equals or matched companions.”

Peer learning is a learning method developed by educationists based on the sociological and psychological theories of social constructivism and cognitive constructivism. The teacher who develops a peer learning environment should be aware of the peer learning principles with its nature. Planning is an important factor in peer learning. The learner should be in a free environment under shared leadership in peer learning situations where the teacher is not to be authoritative; there peer learning occurs. Here, the teacher acts the role by supervising the learning rather than guiding them. Learning material handling is another side of peer learning; the teacher should pick both physical and human resources faithfully when arranging a peer learning atmosphere in different types of peer learning situations.

21st-Century Skills and Holistic Development by Peer Learning

Educational policy reforms in India (2020) plan to switch the nation’s education framework away from rote learning practices toward a holistic model that equips the student community with 21st-century skills, which are essential for progress and success in a demand-driven “globalized workforce.” Educational policy makers identified 21st-century skills in three major domains, such as learning skills, literacy skills, and life skills, that are required for holistic development and desired progress of diverse workplaces in the state by meeting the changing societal and workplace demands.

Learning skills: These are fundamental cognitive skills that equip learners to analyze information and resolve problems systematically by following skills;

- Critical thinking: The ability to analyze information to form decisions.
- Creativity: Thinking diversely and generating something new.
- Collaboration: Fostering synergy and the capacity to work efficiently in different clusters.
- Communication: Upgrading oral and written reflection along with best listening ability.

Literacy skills: The ability to use the latest technology and media by following skills;

- Information literacy: Efficiently use and analyze data from different materials.
- Media literacy: Interpret and evaluate different media messages and their formats.
- Technology literacy: competency in adapting AI tools and platforms.

Life skills: Abilities need to steer personal life and professional life by following qualities

- Adaptability: Equip the students to manage changing situations.
- Leadership: The capacity to inspire individuals or groups to achieve desired goals.
- Social skills: Skills used to interact with others.
- Accountability: taking ownership and responsibility of their own actions and work.

Many of these skills are acquired through progressive education and pedagogical movements in the classrooms, so education needs to equip students to face them because it is not enough to just sit in the classroom and learn, but they also need to learn how to learn. Education needs to move away from teaching content and teach them how to think creatively and critically and solve emerging issues. This will only be possible for students if they are prepared with new materials and challenges. Learning is a process that leads the students to investigate, to make the learner an experientialist, to witness discoveries, and to enable the student to critically examine and enjoy discoveries. The most important goal of the curriculum should be to develop in the learner the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to live in a world where new knowledge is being created every moment. The ability to connect acquired knowledge with the living environment and create new knowledge is a continuous process. Classrooms should be a process of connection. It may be possible to pass the exams, but the ability and skills to apply the knowledge that has been acquired to solve problems are essential. The four pillars mentioned in the document 'Learning Treasures Within,' released by UNESCO (1996), 'Learning to learn,' 'Learning to do,' 'Learning to know,' and 'Learning to live,' are the most important goals of education; this is what the Kerala Curriculum Framework (2023) and National Curriculum Framework (2020) mention.

So, the educational system must be able to provide the kind of education that will enable them to live in their society; only then can our students, society, and country progress in a way that is conducive to them. Peer learning techniques like group projects, peer tutoring, and reciprocal teaching are useful for developing the aforementioned 21st-century skills and nurturing holistic development among students. By switching from teacher-led learning practices to student-centered learning programs, peer learning methods transform learners from "passive recipients" to "active participants." Peer learning activities directly help to cultivate the aforementioned learning skills through teamwork, peer interactions, role-playing, collaborative projects, problem-solving, mentoring roles within the peer groups, etc. (Kollar & Fisher, 2010; Alias et al., 2015). Similarly, appropriate peer learning projects directly impact the social, cognitive, and emotional growth of the students (Vickerman, 2009). Social-emotional development (by empathy, resilience, and confidence) and cognitive and academic growth (by deeper understanding, metacognition, and global & cultural awareness) through appropriate peer learning experiences fostering holistic development of the students.

Transformative Role of Peer Learning in Fostering Entrepreneurial Intention

Entrepreneurial Intention and Peer Learning

Entrepreneurial intention is the conscious desire of the individual to start their own business and become self-employed in the future. This reflects the readiness and willingness to become entrepreneurs, and it is influenced by personal attitudes, social norms, and awareness of one's own abilities. According to Bird (1988), entrepreneurial intention refers to "a state of mind that directs and guides an individual's attention, experience, and actions toward planned entrepreneurial behavior."

There are many factors that influence entrepreneurial intention. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), attitude, subjective norms, and self-efficacy are important. The attitude factor includes individuals' beliefs related to profit, independence, innovation, and personal fulfillment. Subjective norms are influenced by family, friends, teachers, society, and culture. Self-efficacy is a person's belief in their own abilities and confidence that they can face problems and successfully perform the required tasks to achieve the goal. In order to reduce the gap of education and employability, the need for the study of entrepreneurial intention is essential to promote entrepreneurship development.

Peer learning experiences help significantly in the fostering of an entrepreneurial mindset among students by framing their beliefs, attitudes, and perceived capabilities in relation to entrepreneurship. The key ways are as follows:

Formation of Positive Attitude: By peer interactions, student groups are exposed to inspiring stories of success, problem-solving approaches, and innovative ideas of group members. Such social exposures make entrepreneurship appear more achievable, thereby developing a positive attitude toward entrepreneurial careers (Ajzen, 1991).

Influence of Subjective Norms: When peer learners value creativity, self-employment, and risk-taking, learners perceive social approval for “entrepreneurial behavior.” Peer recognition strengthens subjective norms, increasing learners’ intention to achieve entrepreneurship (Ajzen, 1991).

Enhancement of Self-Efficacy: Peer learning experiences provide diverse opportunities for collaborative tasks such as project-based learning, business simulations, and startup planning. Observing peer learners successfully perform various entrepreneurial tasks escalates confidence in one’s own capacity to initiate and manage ventures (Zhao et al. 2005).

Learning by Social Interaction: Peer collaboration within the “Zone of Proximal Development” allows peer learners to achieve entrepreneurial skills such as leadership, decision-making, and negotiation through scaffolding and shared problem solving, which enhance the level of entrepreneurial readiness (Vygotsky, 1978).

Fostering of Entrepreneurial Skills and Competencies: Group tasks and other related activities promote core entrepreneurial competencies such as critical thinking, communication, creativity, and teamwork. As peer learners practice these skills, their readiness to engage in entrepreneurial action enhances (Fayolle, A., & Gaily, B., 2015).

Role Modeling and Peer Inspiration: Peer learners who display initiatives, innovations, or business orientation perform as informal role models. Such peer role models inspire other student members to envision themselves as “potential entrepreneurs” (Bosma et al. 2012).

Peer learning experiences strengthen the entrepreneurial intention of students by positively influencing learners’ attitudes, self-efficacy, and perceived social support, while simultaneously fostering essential entrepreneurial skills through socially mediated and collaborative learning experiences.

Conclusion

Peer learning techniques serve as a crucial catalyst in the development of entrepreneurial intention, transcending the boundaries of traditional classroom learning experiences. By switching from a teacher-led learning model to a learning model of collaborative exchange, peer learning develops an environment of “peer empowerment” where peer learners are motivated by the real-life challenges and success stories of their contemporaries. This “social proximity” decreases the perceived gap between inspiring entrepreneurs and successful role models, significantly escalating “perceived behavioral control” and learner attitudes toward pursuing a venture. The transformative role of the peer learning techniques lies in their methodological capacity to build “entrepreneurial communities” that provide tangible resource sharing and emotional validation. To maximize these potential outcomes, educational frameworks must pivot toward team-based, experiential pedagogies that prioritize networking and collaborative problem-solving. By leveraging the collective power of peers, 21st-century learning experiences can foster a more resilient and innovative generation of “digital entrepreneurs” ready to drive the complexities of the modern economy.

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