

Rural Higher Education Students' Attitude towards Experiential Learning in Kashmir

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Abstract

The present paper attempted to explore rural higher education students' attitude towards experiential learning. 150 undergraduate students (male 75 and female 75) pursuing bachelor's Programme in various rural government degree colleges of Kashmir valley were sampled out through randomization. 25 itemed self-developed questionnaire was administered to measure attitude towards experiential learning. Various statistical techniques and graphical representations such as mean, standard deviation, Levene's test, 2x2 factorial design and estimated marginal means were employed. The study established that attitude towards experiential learning differs significantly with respect to gender and academic stream. Major findings and future research has been communicated in the present study.

Keywords: Experiential, Learning, Rural, Undergraduate, Academic Stream

1. Introduction

Human beings used to learn through trial and error since time immortal. Learning through several attempts and trial & error was first studied by Thorndike (**Wilson, 1924**). Learning through mistakes, experience and by doing has been focussed by John Dewey way back in the late 1800s and early 1900s. While focussing on experiential learning, John Dewey in 1894 has founded the University of Chicago lab school (**Schmidt, 2004**). The popular exponent in the field of experiential learning is **David Kolb (1984; 1985)** whose four geared learning cycle has been beautifully summed up by **Powell & Wells (2002)** as follows:

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Stage 1 (concrete experience): allows learner to confront to a learning situation wherein prior life understanding is aptly applied based upon learner's feelings rather than logic. Stage 2 (reflective observation): allows learner to investigate and reflect ideas in multiple perspectives. Learners try to define a learning situation operationally during this stage. Stage 3 (abstract conceptualization): developing generalizations to widen up the scope of problem solving strategy and analysing the learning unit logically is the motto behind this stage of learning. Stage 4 (active experimentation): this stage is accompanied by diagnosing strength and weak areas while going through a learning situation, testing of what has been hypothesized and using behavioural skills to take action thereof.

In order to promote students engagement in the classroom, **Wurdinger and Carlson (2010)** proposed a cycle of learning that includes planning, testing and reflecting. For them, experiential learning is a paradigm enabling students to learn by 'doing', 'through experiencing', through 'hands on training' and 'reflection'. More recently, National Education Policy (2020) has mentioned 10 times the word 'experiential' and envisaged to develop skills among students through experiential learning right from class 6th.

2. Purpose of the study

National Education Policy (2020) has aptly encouraged adopting experiential learning at all levels of education. Though the concept seems to be new but in fact, was entrenched way back in the Indian education system. As a classroom transaction, experiential learning shifts pedagogy from traditional towards hands-on and arts-integrated education. The purpose of experiential learning is not only to generate vocational or occupational opportunities for students but also to develop national ethos through the medium of Indian art and culture (**Mishra, 2021; Upadhyay, 2021; Naveen, 2021; Noronha, 2021; Kusuma, 2021; Hotchandani, 2021; Shiny, 2021; Hotchandani, 2021; Jagtap, 2021; Abhishekh, 2021; Kumar, 2021**).

Before implementing experiential pedagogy in higher education, it is very significant to know the attitude of students' experiential learning in higher education. The present paper focuses on exploring attitude of students pursuing bachelor's degree in various rural government degree colleges of Kashmir. The findings drawn from the study is obviously going to help teachers while transacting curriculum based upon experiential pedagogy. Furthermore, policy makers can embrace experiential and practice based content into the curriculum of higher education.

3. Objectives

1. To study the attitude of rural higher education students towards experiential learning.
2. To compare the attitude of rural higher education students towards experiential learning with respect to gender and academic stream.

3. Methodology

This study was conducted through the use of descriptive survey design. The population for this study consisted of all rural higher education students pursuing their graduation course from various rural government degree colleges of Kashmir (India). A stratified random sampling technique was employed to partial out the sample size of 150 rural higher education students. The stratification was done on the basis of gender (male 75 and female 75) and academic stream (arts students=55, science students=48, commerce students=33, computer=14). Due representation has been given in selecting the rural government degree colleges, gender and academic stream.

Self-developed questionnaire was administered to students in a real classroom like situation by keeping ethics of test administration in highly consideration. Students responded to 25 itemed Likert questionnaire with parameters namely psychological state (06 statements), organization of experiential activities (07 statements), extent of participation (04 statements) and learning & skill acquisition (08 statements).

4. Analysis and Interpretation

Statistical treatments and graphical representations such as mean, standard deviation, Levene's test, 2x2 factorial design and estimated marginal means were used.

Table 1: Showing Mean and SD of attitude among rural higher education students towards EL across gender and Academic Stream

Gender	Academic Stream	Number	Mean	SD
Male	Arts	19	57.94	9.66
	Science	33	52.90	7.36
	Commerce	12	52.16	5.95
	Computer Application	11	47.00	6.30
	Total	75	53.20	8.27
Female	Arts	36	59.94	5.53
	Science	15	57.80	9.61
	Commerce	21	54.76	7.74
	Computer Application	03	54.66	12.66
	Total	75	57.85	7.60
Total	Arts	55	59.25	7.20
	Science	48	54.43	8.35
	Commerce	33	53.81	7.16
	Computer Application	14	48.64	8.12
	Total	150	55.52	8.25

The examination of table 1 indicates that attitude towards experiential learning is high among female undergraduate students (mean value=57.85) than their male counterparts (mean value=53.20). Moreover, arts undergraduate students (mean value=59.25) have favourable attitude towards experiential learning than science undergraduate students (mean value=54.43), commerce undergraduate students (mean value=53.81) and computer application undergraduate students (mean value=48.64).

Table 2: Showing Levene's Test of Equality of Variances across groups

F	df 1	df 2	Sig
1.59	7	142	0.14*

*Equal variance across groups (homogeneity)

From table 2, it is concluded that there is a sufficient evidence (F-value=1.59) to claim that variances across groups are equal.

Table 3: Showing attitude of rural higher education students towards experiential learning

Variable	Levels	Number	Percentage
Attitude towards Experiential Learning	Unfavorable Attitude	0	0%
	Moderate Attitude	49	32.70%
	Favorable Attitude	101	67.30%

Examination of table 3 indicates that 67.30% of undergraduate students reflected favourable attitude and 32.70% of undergraduate students reflected moderate attitude towards experiential learning process in higher education.

Table 4: Showing attitude of rural higher education students (Gender wise) towards experiential learning

Gender	Number	Levels	Number	Percentage
Male	75	Moderate Attitude	33	44.0%
		Favourable Attitude	42	56.0%
Female	75	Moderate Attitude	16	21.3%
		Favourable Attitude	59	78.70%

The perusal of table 4 represents that favourable attitude towards experiential learning is expressed by 56% rural male and 78.70% rural female undergraduate students. Moderate attitude towards experiential learning is, however, expressed by 44% rural male and 21.30% rural female undergraduate students.

Table 5: Showing attitude of rural higher education students (academic stream wise) towards experiential learning

Academic Stream	Number	Levels	Number	Percentage
Arts	55	Moderate Attitude	05	9.1%
		Favourable Attitude	50	90.9%
Science	48	Moderate Attitude	17	35.4%
		Favourable Attitude	31	64.6%
Commerce	33	Moderate Attitude	16	48.5%
		Favourable Attitude	17	51.5%
Computer Applications	14	Moderate Attitude	11	78.60
		Favourable Attitude	03	21.4%

Table 5 depicts that favourable attitude towards experiential learning is exhibited by 90.9% of arts, 64.6% science, 51.5% of commerce and 21.4% of computer application rural undergraduate students. Moderate attitude towards experiential learning is, however, exhibited by 9.1% of arts, 35.4% science, 48.5% of commerce and 78.6% of computer application rural undergraduate students.

Table 6: Two way analysis of variance for attitude towards experiential learning (2×2 Factorial Design)

Variables	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F-Value
A (Gender)	401.48	01	401.48	7.04**
B (Academic Stream)	896.68	03	298.89	5.24**
A×B	95.15	03	31.71	0.55
Within	8092.10	142	56.98	
Total	472641.00	150		

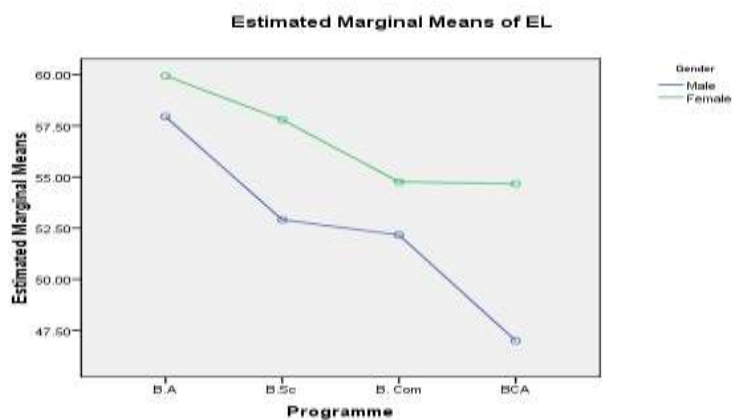
**Significance at 0.01 level

Table 6 presents a 2x2 factorial design in which factor gender (A) with two levels (male & female) produced a significant f-value of 7.04 at 0.01 level. This indicates that male and female rural undergraduate students differ significantly to each other on attitude towards experiential learning.

Factor academic stream (B) with four groups (arts, science, commerce, computer application) yielded a significant f-value of 5.24 at 0.01 level. This indicates that rural undergraduate students with having various academic streams such as arts, science, commerce and computer application differ significantly to each other on attitude towards experiential learning.

Interaction AxB (gender and academic stream) is not significant even at 0.05 level. Hence, any discussion seems not to be a healthy one.

Below given figure 1 is all about the estimated marginal means based on a reference grid. The grid has been constructed based on the mean values given in tables 1-6.



5. Findings and Discussion

Present study has concluded that female higher education students pursuing bachelor's degree in various rural government degree colleges of Kashmir were found to have favourable attitude towards experiential learning than their rural male counterparts. Gender attitudinal difference with respect to experiential learning has been also explored by **Chavan, 2011**. The social set up in rural areas of Kashmir demands activities like cooking, sewing, weaving, tailoring, making trendy recipes and cuisines, etc. from females. Such art integrated activities have shaped females to develop right attitude towards experiential learning.

Furthermore, arts undergraduate students were having more favourable attitude towards experiential learning than science, commerce and computer application counterparts. Experiential learning is all about hands-on learning. It is purely skill and vocation oriented. Arts and craft work is a discipline that inculcates skills essential for income-generating vocations. In this regard, **NEP (2020)** has also focussed that teacher education needs to be reinvented through the medium of arts integration (**Juluri, 2021**).

6. Conclusion

The core of higher educational process needs to be modified as the society demands. Experiential learning involves autonomy, flexibility, responsibility, accountability and involvement of students. A transition between theory and practice, experiential pedagogy shifted the role of teacher from lecturer to facilitator in higher education. After knowing about the attitude of students towards experiential learning, the curriculum transaction process will only become a significant learning process. In-depth content understanding develops when students transfer learning from classroom to authentic situations through the

methodology of experiential learning. It is expected that further research will be undertaken on experiential learning with respect to its pros and cons, status in educational institutions at all levels, pedagogical orientation for teachers, etc.

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