

Experiential Learning in Higher Education: Tribulations in Execution

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Abstract

Experiential learning often yield good results and help to improve the teaching learning process. There is dire need to use such type of learning at higher level so that whatever students learn remains fixed in their mind for longer time. Teacher must provide opportunity to students to learn by doing. The major purpose of this research has been to analyze the main tribulations teacher faced during execution of experiential learning in actual classroom. The study was conducted in Ranbir Singh Pura Tehsil of Jammu District. The study was qualitative in nature. The sample comprised of 50 teachers of higher education institutions. Interview schedule was prepared to collect the data and percentage was used to analyze the data. It has been found that experiential learning is useful to make teaching learning process more effective but teachers faced problems to implement experience based learning in the classroom due to overloaded curriculum, lack of knowledge of new skills, more emphasized on theoretical work, lack of budget, limited class time, limited access to resources and like that. It has been suggested by the investigator to modify the curriculum and equal weightage should be given to both theoretical and practical courses. Teachers (both pre- service and in - service) must provide new skills, practical work and the way to conduct experiential learning in an interesting and effective way.

Keywords: *Experiential Learning, Teacher, Higher Education.*

Introduction:

Wisdom is not what comes from reading great books. When it comes to understanding life, experiential learning is the only worthwhile kind, everything else is hearsay.”

-----Joan Erikson

Unlike traditional learning, experiential learning (EXL) is based on “learning through experience” or “learning by doing”. John Dewey (1859-1952), Carl Rogers (1902-1987) and David Kolb (1939) have provided the ground work of leaning theories that based on experiential learning. Experiential learning focused on problem solving and critical thinking rather than memorization and rote learning. Experience based learning emphasize that students will be more motivated to learn when they have a personal interest in the subject rather than being assigned to review a topic.

Experiential learning (EXL) takes place beyond the traditional classroom and enhances the personal and intellectual growth of the student. This type of learning can occur in a wide variety of settings, it engages the student directly in the subject, work or service involved (Katula and Threnhauser1999).

Experiential learning has gained recent impetus in the higher education. The purpose of this learning is to generate student competence in self directed learning, citizenship, eco-sustainability and employability in addition to traditional knowledge, skills and attitudes within particular disciplines (Deakin Crick, Goldspink and Foster, 2013). Kolb and Kolb (2009) stated that experiential learning completely changed the autocratic style of teaching where teacher plays an important role and he/she is in active mode whereas students may remain passive and unmotivated. The role of teacher in this type of learning is to supervise or facilitate rather than direct the student’s progress.

In higher education institutions, teachers adopted experience based learning in order to engage students. But sometime due to certain tribulations teachers are not able to execute such learning. This paper provides empirical evidence regarding the problems teachers faced during conducting experience based learning in classroom.

Need and Significance of Study:

“An ounce of experience is better than a ton of theory simply because it is only in experience that any theory has vital and verifiable significance.”

.....*John Dewey, 1988*

Experiential learning is not a new concept in the present scenario. No doubt, it makes teaching learning process more effective, interesting and self-initiative. Rote learning has long been replaced by learning by doing and to provide firsthand experience to students. Many seminars, conferences and workshop stressed on conducting experiential learning. But in practice it is somewhat difficult to implement this type of learning in real classroom. Whatever policies, programs and innovations framed their smooth functioning depends by and large on the teachers. The conscientiousness of teachers is never underestimated. Now-a –days, teachers are not only teaching but they have to do various activities in educational institutions. In order to perform these activities they have to go through various tribulations. It has been found that experiential challenges need to be solved like unawareness of the teachers about the practical experiences, paying less attention towards experience based activities, timing of practical activities, supervision as well as managing students activities in the plans of experiential learning (Arnold et al., 2006). Thus, the present study is an ardent effort by the investigator to know the problems faced by teachers of higher education to implement the experiential learning in the real classroom.

Objectives of Study:

1. To study problems faced by teachers of higher education institutions to implement experiential learning in actual classroom.
2. To suggest suitable recommendations to overcome the problems of implementing experiential learning in actual classroom.

Research Questions:

1. What are the problems faced by teachers of higher education institutions for the proper implementation of experiential learning?
2. What are the major recommendations to overcome these problems in actual classroom?

Delimitations of Study:

1. The present study was delimited to 50 teachers only.
2. The present study was confined to higher education institutions of R.S.Pura Tehsil of Jammu District.

Area of Study:

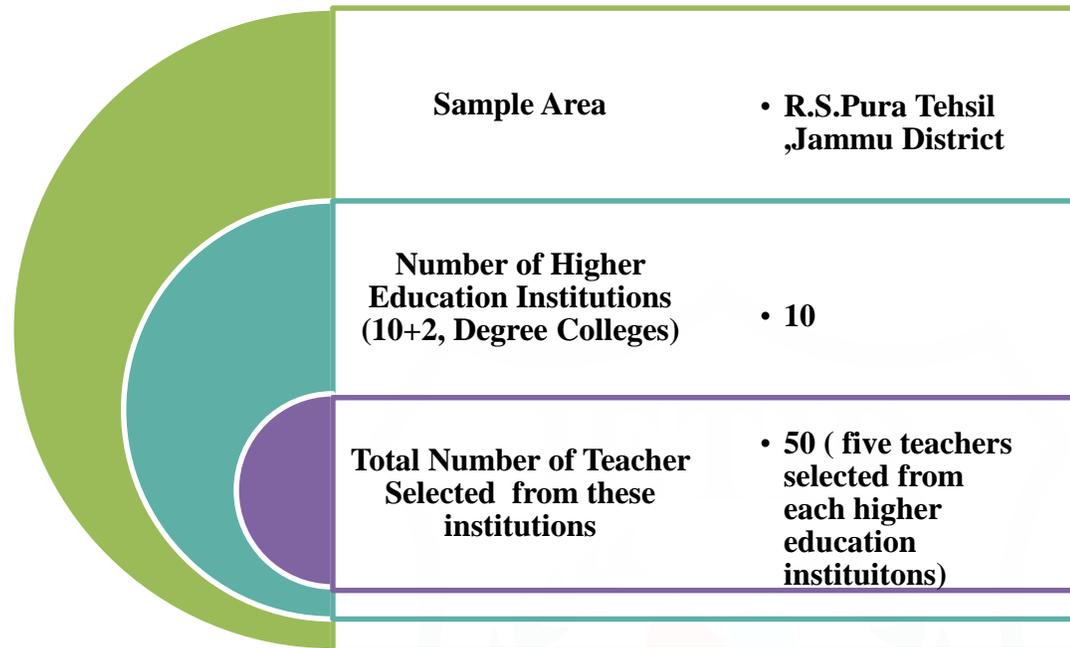
The present study was conducted in Ranbir Singh Pura Tehsil of Jammu District.

Research Design:

The study was qualitative in nature.

Sample of Study:

For the present study, **50** teachers of higher education institutions were selected to study the problems of implementing experiential learning in actual classroom.

Sample Profile:**Sampling Technique:**

For this study, Purposive Sampling Technique was used to collect the data.

Tool Used:

In order to study the problems faced by teachers to implement experiential learning in actual classroom, the researcher used self prepared “interview schedule”.

Techniques Used:

For analyzing the data, Percentage was used.

Analysis and Interpretation of Results:

1. 95% of the respondents responded that experiential learning is more useful but due to overloaded curriculum they are not able to conduct it properly in actual classroom.
2. 85% of the teachers responded that in our education system much focused is on bookish knowledge and they have to prepare the students for achieving the academic target only.
3. Majority of respondents (79%) responded that there is no provision of separating the practical courses from theoretical ones.
4. 82% teachers reported that there is lack of teacher knowledge about new practical skills.
5. 72% believed that there is no provision of separate evaluation of some practical credits such as visit, fieldtrips etc.

6. 69% respondent responded that there is discrepancy between the number of the students and necessary equipment, audio-visual materials as well as space available for practical experiences while conducting learning based on experience.
7. 73% believed that experiential learning is time consuming.
8. 92% teachers reported that there is limited class time (i.e., 40-45 minutes) in which it's quite difficult to spend time on the experiential learning activities.
9. 66% respondent responded that there is no provision to conduct practical courses during the evenings or when there is holiday when students and instructor have more time.
10. 87% revealed that there is limited access to resources like photocopies, access to computer and internet.
11. 67% responded supposed that there is an inadequate group work skills.
12. 78% said that not enough opportunities for reflection are provided to students by teachers.
13. 69% responded respond that more concentration is given on students to pursue education rather than of learning new skills.
14. 78% stated that there is low participation of higher rank faculty members.
15. 82% of the teacher reported that faculty members are not motivated to update their practical skills.
16. 71% respondent responded that they are not paying much attention to parallel and additional experiences.
17. 70% respondent believed that there is lack of knowledge to teach the students through experiential learning in some courses like mathematics, English literature etc.
18. 83% stated that there is repetition of some experiments by teachers in different courses and create monotony in classroom learning.
19. Majority of respondents (97%) responded that there is lack of budget in the educational institutions for providing various facilities required for experiential learning.
20. 80% teachers believed that it is difficult for them to give hands on experience in every subject/course.

Recommendations:

1. There is need to reconstruct and modify the curriculum. Equal weightage should be given to both theoretical and practical courses.
2. During pre-service and in-service teacher training, teacher should provide knowledge regarding new skills, practical work and the way to conduct experience based learning in an interesting and effective way.
3. The government agencies must provide budget, equipments to conduct field trips, visit, internship, project based learning etc.
4. Higher level authority must motivate the teachers and students to learn new skills instead passing the course.
5. The curriculum of the practical courses with respect to contents, methods and physical settings should be modified.
6. Workshop, seminar, conferences and refresher courses should be organized time to time in order to implement experiential learning in actual classroom.

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