



Experiential Learning for Cultural Awareness: Teaching Traditional Indian Paintings to School Children

Dr. Ritu Madhan & Ms. Meeta Sapre

Associate Professor & Research Student

Department of Textile & Fashion Technology

College of Home Science Nirmala Niketan (Autonomous)

49, New Marine Lines, Mumbai – 400020, India

Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of experiential and game-based learning approaches in creating awareness of traditional Indian painting styles among school-going children. Focusing on Warli, Madhubani, and Gond art forms, the research integrates presentations, play-way activities, and specially designed do-it-yourself (DIY) kits to enhance student engagement and cultural understanding. A pilot study was initially conducted to refine the instructional framework, followed by structured workshops implemented in two schools representing CBSE and ICSE boards. Data were collected through teacher and student feedback questionnaires, observational analysis, and flashcard-based assessments to evaluate recognition and recall of art forms. The findings indicate high levels of student participation, improved identification of traditional painting styles, and sustained interest in similar learning activities. Teachers also acknowledged the relevance of such interventions in supporting the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, particularly in promoting creativity, cultural awareness, and holistic learning. The study demonstrates that art-based, interactive pedagogical tools can effectively bridge cultural heritage and contemporary education. While limited in scale, the research establishes a foundation for wider implementation and future exploration of DIY kits as scalable educational resources.

Keywords: Warli, Madhubani, Gond, Play-way method, National Education Policy (NEP 2020)

Introduction:

India's cultural heritage is deeply rooted in its diverse folk and tribal art traditions, which serve as visual narratives of community life, belief systems, and social values. Art forms such as Warli, Madhubani, and Gond paintings represent not only aesthetic expression but also indigenous knowledge systems transmitted across generations. Despite their cultural significance, exposure to these traditional art forms within formal school education remains limited, often confined to textbook references with minimal experiential engagement.

Contemporary education increasingly recognises the importance of holistic learning approaches that extend beyond rote instruction. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 strongly advocates the integration of arts, culture, and Indian Knowledge Systems into mainstream education to foster creativity, cultural identity, and experiential understanding. In this context, pedagogical methods that actively involve learners—rather than passive modes of instruction—become particularly relevant. Experiential learning, supported by play-way and

game-based strategies, enables students to construct knowledge through direct interaction, reflection, and creative participation.

Experiential learning approaches have been shown to enhance engagement, retention, and emotional connection to subject matter, especially among school-age learners. When applied to cultural education, such methods allow children to explore traditional knowledge systems through doing, observing, and creating, rather than merely memorising historical facts. Game-based learning (GBL) and play-way methods further support this process by aligning learning outcomes with enjoyment, curiosity, and intrinsic motivation. These approaches are particularly effective in early and middle school contexts, where creativity and tactile engagement play a central role in cognitive and social development.

Within the domain of art education, experiential strategies offer significant potential for fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity. However, existing practices often lack structured models that combine traditional art education with contemporary pedagogical frameworks aligned with national policy objectives. There remains a need for research that examines how experiential learning tools, such as workshops, interactive activities, and hands-on creative tasks, can effectively introduce traditional Indian painting styles to school-going children in a meaningful and engaging manner.

The present study addresses this gap by exploring an experiential learning framework designed to create cultural awareness among school children through traditional Indian paintings. Focusing on Warli, Madhubani, and Gond art forms, the research employs a combination of visual presentations, play-based activities, and hands-on creative engagement to examine student response, learning outcomes, and levels of cultural appreciation. The study is situated within the pedagogical vision of NEP 2020 and draws upon principles of experiential learning, play-way methodology, and Indian Knowledge Systems.

By evaluating the effectiveness of these approaches across different school boards, the research seeks to demonstrate how experiential learning can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool for cultural education. The findings aim to contribute to the discourse on integrating traditional arts into school curricula, while offering practical insights for educators seeking innovative, learner-centred methods to nurture cultural awareness and creativity among children.

Objectives of the Study:

The present study was undertaken with the following objectives:

1. To examine the effectiveness of experiential learning approaches in creating cultural awareness of traditional Indian paintings among school-going children.
2. To assess student engagement, interest, and learning outcomes resulting from play-way and game-based instructional methods.
3. To explore teachers' perceptions regarding the relevance of experiential, art-based learning in the context of school education and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
4. To evaluate students' ability to recognise and differentiate between selected traditional Indian painting styles following experiential learning interventions.

Research Methodology:

Research Design

The study adopted a **descriptive and experiential research design**, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to assess learning outcomes and participant responses. The research framework was structured to evaluate how experiential learning interventions influence cultural awareness and engagement among school-going children.

Sample Selection

The study was conducted in two schools representing different educational boards—CBSE and ICSE. Participants included school children who took part in the experiential learning sessions, along with

teachers who provided feedback on the relevance and effectiveness of the intervention. A purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure participation from institutions open to innovative pedagogical practices.

Experiential Learning Intervention

The intervention was designed around selected traditional Indian painting styles—Warli, Madhubani, and Gond. Learning sessions were conducted in the form of structured workshops that combined:

- Visual presentations introducing the historical and cultural context of the art forms
- Play-way and game-based activities to stimulate curiosity and interaction
- Hands-on creative engagement allowing students to explore motifs, symbols, and stylistic features through guided activities

A pilot session was initially conducted to refine instructional strategies and activity sequencing. Based on observations and feedback, the final workshops were implemented in the selected schools.

Data Collection Tools

Data were collected using multiple tools to capture both learning outcomes and participant perceptions:

- **Student feedback questionnaires** to assess interest, enjoyment, and perceived learning
- **Teacher feedback questionnaires** to evaluate pedagogical relevance and alignment with NEP 2020
- **Flashcard-based assessments** to test students' ability to identify and differentiate between painting styles
- **Observational records** documenting student participation and engagement during sessions

Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires and assessments were analysed using descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentage distribution. Qualitative observations were used to support and contextualise the quantitative findings, providing insights into student engagement and experiential learning outcomes.

Results and Discussion:

The findings of the study indicate that experiential learning approaches play a significant role in enhancing cultural awareness and engagement among school-going children. The integration of play-way methods, game-based learning, and hands-on creative activities resulted in high levels of participation and sustained interest throughout the learning sessions. Observational records revealed that students were more attentive and responsive during interactive activities compared to conventional instructional segments, supporting the premise that experiential engagement facilitates deeper learning.

Student feedback responses demonstrated a strong positive reception towards the experiential learning framework. A majority of participants reported enjoying the sessions and expressed enthusiasm for learning through creative and play-based methods. The hands-on engagement enabled students to actively explore visual elements such as motifs, symbols, and colour schemes, fostering a more personal connection with the traditional painting styles introduced. These findings align with existing literature that highlights experiential learning as an effective strategy for promoting engagement and meaningful knowledge construction among children.

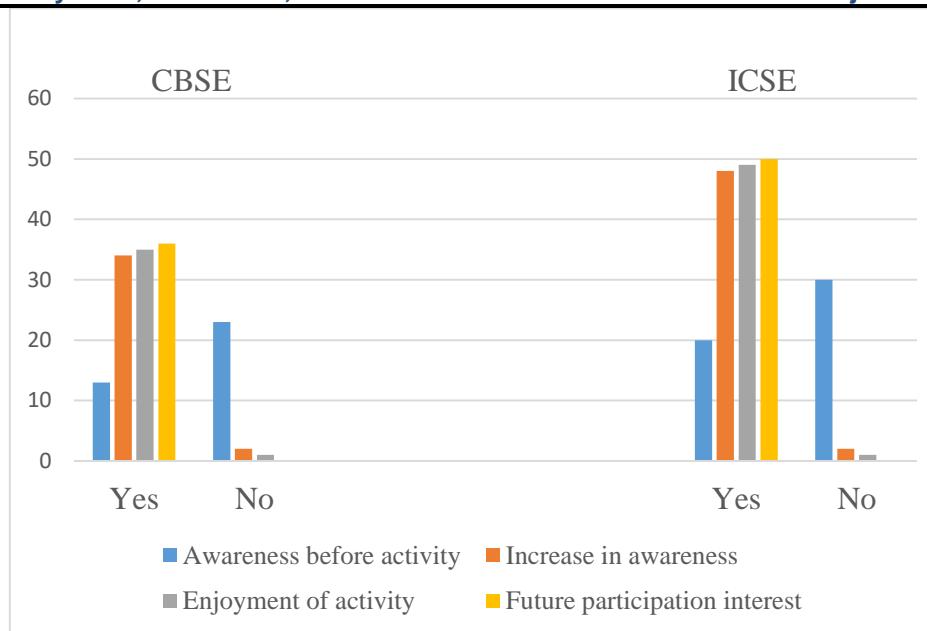


Figure No. 1: Feedback of students after the workshop

Assessment through flashcard-based recognition tasks showed improved ability among students to identify and differentiate between Warli, Madhubani, and Gond paintings following the intervention. The visual and tactile nature of the activities appeared to support recall and recognition, suggesting that experiential exposure enhances cognitive association with cultural content. This outcome reinforces the effectiveness of game-based and play-way methods in reinforcing learning objectives, particularly in art and culture education where visual literacy is essential.

Teacher feedback further validated the pedagogical relevance of the intervention. Educators acknowledged that experiential learning approaches aligned well with classroom realities and curriculum objectives, especially in the context of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. Teachers noted that such methods encouraged creativity, collaboration, and learner autonomy, key competencies emphasised within contemporary educational frameworks. The integration of traditional Indian art forms through experiential strategies was also viewed as an effective means of introducing Indian Knowledge Systems in a manner that is accessible and engaging for children.

Comparative observations across the two school boards indicated similar patterns of engagement and learning outcomes, suggesting that experiential learning approaches possess adaptability across varied educational contexts. While minor differences in classroom dynamics were observed, the overall response to the intervention remained consistently positive. This adaptability strengthens the potential for broader application of experiential, art-based pedagogies within school education.

Despite the encouraging outcomes, the study acknowledges certain limitations. The scope of the research was limited to a small sample size and short-duration interventions, which may restrict the generalization of the findings. Additionally, the assessment of long-term retention and deeper cultural understanding was beyond the scope of the present study. However, the results provide valuable preliminary evidence supporting the role of experiential learning in fostering cultural awareness through traditional art education.

Overall, the findings underscore the effectiveness of experiential learning as a pedagogical tool for cultural education. By engaging students in active participation and creative exploration, traditional Indian paintings were transformed from abstract cultural references into lived learning experiences. This approach not only enhanced awareness and recognition but also encouraged appreciation of cultural heritage among young learners.

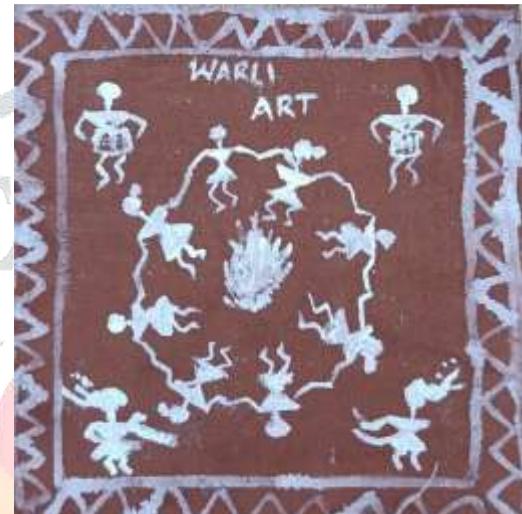




Figure No. 2: Paintings done by students post awareness building workshops

Conclusion:

The present study demonstrates that experiential learning serves as an effective pedagogical approach for fostering cultural awareness of traditional Indian paintings among school-going children. By integrating play-way and game-based learning strategies with hands-on creative engagement, the research highlights how active participation enhances student interest, recognition, and appreciation of cultural art forms. The experiential framework enabled learners to move beyond passive exposure, transforming traditional Indian paintings into meaningful and engaging learning experiences.

Aligned with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, the study reinforces the importance of incorporating arts, culture, and Indian Knowledge Systems into school education through learner-centred methodologies. The positive responses from both students and teachers indicate that experiential, art-based interventions can effectively support creativity, cultural sensitivity, and holistic development within diverse educational contexts.

While the study was limited by sample size and duration, the findings provide valuable insights into the pedagogical potential of experiential learning for cultural education. Future research may extend this work by examining long-term learning outcomes, scalability across broader educational settings, and the integration of structured experiential tools within formal curricula. Overall, the study contributes to ongoing discourse on innovative teaching practices and underscores the relevance of experiential learning in preserving and transmitting cultural heritage in contemporary education.

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