RESEARCH ARTICLE

Journal of Extension Education
Vol. 34 No.2, 2022
DOI: https://doi.org/10.26725/JEE.2022.2.34.6810-6816

Attitude of Undergraduate Students in Rural Colleges of Kashmir Valley towards Experiential Learning

Mehaj ud Din Sheikh[1], Debendra Nath Dash[2] and Sajad Ahmad Mir[3]

ABSTRACT

Experiential learning, which is the process of learning through direct experience and reflection, is a core component of contemporary education system. The present study attempted to explore the attitude of undergraduate students in rural degree colleges of Kashmir valley in the state of Jammu & Kashmir, towards experiential learning. Altogether, 150 undergraduate students pursuing bachelor's programme in various rural government degree colleges, were identified for the study through randomization. The 25 item- questionnaire was administered to measure the attitude towards experiential learning. Various statistical techniques and graphical representations such as mean, standard deviation, percentage, 2x2 factorial design were employed. The study established that attitude towards experiential learning differs significantly with respect to gender and academic stream among the undergraduate students.

Keywords: *Experiential learning; Rural education; Attitude ; Skills; Jammu and Kashmir*

INTRODUCTION

Human beings used to learn through trial and error since time immemorial. 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). David Kolb's four geared learning cycle has been summed up by Powell & Wells (2002) as follows:

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

[1]Higher Education Department J&K, Posted at Government Degree College, Kupwara, Jammu and Kashmir 193222
[2] Mahatma Gandhi National Council of Rural Education, , Govt. of India, Hyderabad. Telangana - 500004
[3]School of Education, Baba Ghulam Shah Badshah University, Dhanore, Rajouri, Jammu and Kashmir 185234
Received : 17.03.2023 ; **Accepted :** 17.08.2023

areas while going through a learning situation, testing of what has been hypothesized and using behavioural skills to take action thereof.

Experiential learning in higher education fosters critical thinking abilities, deepens comprehension of the subject matter, satisfies the need for practical education, and prepares students for real-world difficulties (Fink, 2003; Jarvis, 2009). Experiential pedagogies include internships, field studies, case studies, service-learning initiatives, collaborative methods, simulations, and role play. Furthermore, the method promotes collaborative learning, professionalism, peer tutoring, team teaching, and cooperation (Ilyas, Siddiquah & Batool, 2022).

Before implementing experiential pedagogy in higher education, it is very important to know the attitude of students' experiential learning in higher education. The present paper focuses on exploring attitude of rural higher education students pursuing bachelor's degree in various rural government degree colleges of Kashmir. The implications drawn from the study are likely to help teachers in transacting the curriculum in a more practical and efficient manner. Furthermore, policy makers can embrace experiential and practice-based content into the curriculum of higher education.

Objectives of the Study

- to study the attitude of undergraduate students towards experiential learning enrolled in rural colleges of Kashmir valley
- to compare the attitude of undergraduate students towards experiential learning with respect to gender and academic stream.

METHODOLOGY

The sample of the present study consisted of 150 undergraduate students (75 male and 75 female) studying in rural degree colleges of Kashmir valley in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. There are fifty-nine (59) rural degree colleges in Kashmir valley out of which five (05) nodal colleges (one from each district) were randomly selected from each province. The representative sample of 30 students from each institution (15 male & 15 female) having different academic streams (arts, science, commerce and computer applications) belongs to various semesters (1st to 6th semester) and knowing various languages etc. were selected randomly. The selective sample of 150 undergraduate students from the total cluster of students studying in rural degree colleges of Kashmir were selected by using non-proportionate stratified random sampling technique.

The standardised questionnaire was administered to students in a real classroom like situation by keeping ethics of test administration in consideration. Students responded to a 25 item 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).

At the first stage, data were treated by descriptive statistical technique - mean and standard deviation. At the second stage data were subjected to inferential analysis such as percentage and two-way analysis of variance by employing statistical technique (SPSS).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The present study intended to know the attitude and perception of undergraduate students enrolled in degree colleges of Kashmir

towards experiential learning. In the present investigation two independent variables-gender & academic stream and a dependent variable-experiential learning were taken in to consideration.

Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards Experiential Learning across Gender and Academic Stream

The attitude of undergraduate students towards Experiential Learning across Gender and Academic Stream was assessed.

Table 1. Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards Experiential Learning (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 table depicts the comparison of mean scores of the attitude of undergraduate students towards experiential learning (EL) varied at two levels (gender & academic stream). It indicates that the mean score of female undergraduate students ($\bar{X}$=57.85) towards experiential learning is higher than their male counterparts ($\bar{X}$=53.20). Moreover, arts undergraduate students ($\bar{X}$=59.25) have much favourable attitude towards experiential learning than science ($\bar{X}$=54.43), commerce ($\bar{X}$=53.81) and computer application undergraduate students ($\bar{X}$=48.64) respectively. The results thus clearly shows that the female undergraduate students are well versed with experiential learning, are satisfied with experiential learning opportunities provided by the institutions, actively participate in experiential learning skills, workshops, training programmes, project works etc enhance their problem-solving ability and theoretical knowledge of the subject as envisaged from the self-constructed questionnaire constructed by

the investigators. 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.

Overall Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards Experiential learning

The overall attitude of undergraduate students towards experiential learning was assessed and the findings are given in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards Experiential Learning

Variable	Levels	Number	Percentage
Attitude towards Experiential Learning	Unfavourable Attitude	0	0
	Moderate Attitude	49	32.70
	Favourable Attitude	101	67.30

To achieve the objective, "*to study the attitude of undergraduate students towards experiential learning of rural colleges of Kashmir*" a self-constructed questionnaire having 27 items with 05 responses to each item was administered. In this way, the maximum possible score of the scale was 135 and the minimum score was 27. If a student earns above 100 on the questionnaire is interpreted with having favourable experiential learning attitude. If a respondent gets a score between 63-99 is interpreted with having moderate experiential learning attitude and if a respondent earns experiential learning score between 27-62 is interpreted with having low experiential learning. Examination of table 2 indicates that 67.30% of undergraduate students reflected favourable attitude and 32.70% of undergraduate students reflected moderate attitude towards experiential learning studying in rural degree colleges of Kashmir. The results reveal that, on an average 32 per cent of students pursuing degrees courses in rural colleges of Kashmir are well versed with experiential learning, taking care individual interests and needs through experiential learning process, actively participate in activities, practices, workshops, field trips etc organised by the institution based on learning by personal experiences.

Gender-wise Attitude of undergraduate students towards Experiential Learning.

The gender-wise attitude of undergraduate students towards experiential learning was ascertained and presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Gender-wise Attitude of Undergraduate students 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 3 shows that favourable attitude towards experiential learning was expressed by 56% rural undergraduate male students and 78.70% rural female undergraduate students. Moderate attitude towards experiential learning was, however, expressed by 44% rural male and 21.30% rural female undergraduate students. Inferred from the above discussion is that the female undergraduate students studying in rural colleges of Kashmir are experiencing favourable attitude and have better perception of experiential learning as compared to undergraduate male students. The possible reason could be that females may exhibit a more holistic cognitive style, focusing on contextual details and connections, which could make them more inclined towards experiential and practical learning. Undergraduate male students on the other hand, might lean towards analytical thinking. Females and males might have different interests and motivations, leading them to engage differently with learning materials. Females might find more intrinsic motivation in hands-on, real-world experiences.

Academic stream-wise Attitude of Undergraduate Students towards Experiential learning.

The academic stream-wise attitude of undergraduate students towards experiential learning was assessed and the findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Academic stream-wise Attitude of Undergraduate Students 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 4 depicts that favourable attitude towards experiential learning was 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 was, however, exhibited by 9.1% of arts, 35.4% science, 48.5% of commerce and 78.6% of computer application rural undergraduate students. The results thus, clearly shows that rural undergraduate arts students might perceive self-experience as a more direct way to acquire knowledge and skills. There are limited access and availability to advanced laboratories, equipment, or technology often associated with science and commerce studies in rural degree colleges of Kashmir, which becomes demotivating factor for the students about learning by self-experience and on the

other hand arts subjects can have more flexibility for exploration and self-expression.

Assessment of Differences among the Undergraduate Students

To know whether there is significant difference between male and female rural undergraduate student having different (arts, science, commerce and computer application) academic streams, a 2×2 factorial design was employed and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. 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 5 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. Furthermore, the results clearly shows that arts undergraduate students are 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. There is no interaction effect of gender and academic stream on the measure of experiential learning. It can be revealed from results of Table 5 that the main effect 'A' as well as the main effect 'B' functioning independently in the process of experiential learning. While as the Interaction A×B (gender & academic stream) associated with F value of 0.55 which is insignificant. It means that experiential learning has not been influenced by the interaction effect of gender and academic stream.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that arts students were highly motivated as they witness practical relevance of what they have been taught.

Analysing complex life situations, making decisions and solving problems in a unique form fosters critical thinking skills. Rural female students who are responsible, tolerant, open to new ideas and art integrated have developed right attitude towards experiential learning. The constraints hindering the advancements of experiential learning among students such as financial constrictions, low confidence, inadequate communication flow, unfavourable behaviour should be overcome. Experiential learning is tailored to develop students' overall personal and professional aspects. In this regard, opportunities for optimizing both hard and soft skills among students shall be entertained. Experiential learning methodologies prepare and translate students from academia to workplace. The study concludes that workshops, seminars and visit to real industrial scenarios shall be organized for students. The study has concluded that experiential learning pedagogies if established for rural students irrespective of academic/professional stream and gender may develop their cultural competence, collaboration attitude, diversity awareness, career readiness, and retention and application.

REFERENCES

Chavan, M. S. (2011). Higher education students' attitudes towards experiential learning in international business. *Journal of Teaching in International Business*, 22, 126-143; DOI: 10.1080/08975930.2011.615677.

Fink, L. D. (2003). *Creating significant learning experiences*: An integrated approach to designing college courses. John Wiley & Sons.

Ilyas, Siddiquah, & Batool, (2022). Challenging factors in the practices of experiential learning for students; professional development at higher education. *Journal of Positive School Psychology*, 6(12), 1894-1904.

Jarvis, P. (2009). Learning to be a person in society. The Routledge International Handbook of Learning, pp. 9-16.Juluri, P. (2021). Promotion of Vocational Education in Teacher Education Institutions in the States of Telangana, West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. *Indian Journal of Rural Education and Engagement*, 8, 1-34.

Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development*, (Prentice-Hall; Englewood Cliffs, NJ).

Kolb, D. (1985). *Learning Style Inventory*. (McBer and Company; Boston, MA).

National Education Policy (2020): Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, 2020. Retrieved from: https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP

Powell, K., & Wells, M. (2002). The effectiveness of three experiential teaching approaches on student science learning in fifth- grade public school classrooms. *Journal of Environmental Education*, *33*(2), 33-38.

Schmidt, S. J. (2004). Keep your ear to the ground, *Journal of Food Science Education*, *3*, 47–48.

Wilson, W. R. (1924). Selection in "Trial and Error" Learning. *Psychological Review*, *31*(2), 150–160. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0073392.