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A study on the effect of experiential learning method on academic achievement in class nine students in English

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Abstract

“Academic performance is based on measurable outcomes such as class exercise, test, and examinations results.”

The purpose of this study is to determine the effects of experiential learning method on students’ academic achievement in English. The pre and post-test research pattern with treatment and control groups was used throughout the study. While the experimental group received education through experiential learning method, the control group was taught with a traditional centred approach. The sample consisted of forty students studying in class nine from Govt. High School, Mahmand, Bilaspur, C.G, India. Data collection tools were the English test and academic achievement final test in English. The average scores of students obtained from the academic achievement test increased after the applications, and were ($Z: -3.935$; $Z: -3.630$; $p < 0.01$) and the academic achievement scores of the students at the control and treatment groups were finally ($U=92.00$; $p < 0.05$). As the study concluded, it was found that experiential learning method is an effective approach on academic achievement. The applicability of experiential learning to class nine English curriculum out of teaching curricula rather than those at the schools can be investigated.

Keywords: Academic achievement, English, experiential learning method, students

Introduction

“Academic achievement is the extent to which a learner is profiting from instructions in a given area of learning i.e., achievement is reflected by the extent to which skill or knowledge has been imparted to him.”

- Crow and Crow (1969)

Learning occurs as a result of experiences and individuals do not always learn in the same way. To increase the quality of education, learning environments appropriate for individual differences should be created. Differences in general characteristics of students are reflected on their learning processes. Experiential learning theory depends on studies by Dewey, who takes experiences as basis in learning, Lewin, who emphasises the importance of students’ being active in the learning process. Experiential learning is considered as an effective way of educational approach. The reason for this is the impact of experiential learning on the development of learners’ meta cognitive skills, enhancing the skills through the implementation of the knowledge to the real situations, and giving the learners the ability of self-learning. Thus, it will be possible for the individuals to improve their academic achievement in English. Experiential learning methods which facilitate learning, attain research methods, ensure individuals’ active participation and responsibility taking in learning as well as increasing permanence of learning, could be developed through the experiential learning method, in English too. The literature review indicates that there are not many studies examining the effect of experiential learning in English, to enable learners improve their academic achievement. This study is significant in terms of revealing the importance of academic achievement based on the model of experiential learning rather than the traditional centred method. Especially, in the initial High School classes with learning contents in English, the experiential learning method could be used to increase students’

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academic achievement levels. The current study, which has been conducted on this basis, aims to find out the effects of experiential learning method on class nine students in their academic achievement, in English.

Methodology

This study, which aims to analyse the effects of teaching through the experiential learning method on students' academic achievement in English, was designed within the pre and post-test research pattern with control and experimental groups. Control and experimental groups were determined according to the independent sampling groups' method.

a) Sample

The sampling of the study consisted of 40 students studying in class nine from Govt. High School, Mahmand. The study was conducted within the general English class. The experimental group was taught through the experiential learning method, while the control group was taught through the traditional centred method.

b) Data Collection Tools

English Test

Students' achievement levels were assessed through the English test questionnaire prepared by the research scholar. The English achievement test consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions based on vocabulary. Reliability and validity studies were done on more than 100 students. The achievement test was administered to the students who are attending English teaching classes taken from the English course. To evaluate the English achievement test, correct answers and wrong answers have been scored as 1 and 0 respectively. Item analysis was made with the ITEMAN Windows Version 3.50 statistics software and the English achievement test of 15 items with 0.49 average difficulty values, 0.54 average distinctiveness, and the 0.64 reliability coefficient. The literature points out that the item discrimination index of the test is very high, the test comprises of medium difficulty items according to item difficulty index, and it is at an acceptable level in terms of reliability.

Academic achievement Test

To determine students' academic achievement in English (SPST) developed by Okey, Wise and Burns (1982) was used. It consisted of 36 multiple-choice questions. Reliability coefficient of the test was found to be 0.82. The reliability of the adapted version of the test was found to be 0.81. Therefore, the test was interpreted as reliable and it was implemented to both control and experimental groups as pre and post-tests. For the evaluation, correct and wrong answers have been scored as 1 and 0 respectively.

c) Phases of Experiential Process

The applications for the academic achievement test in English had been carried out by using the experiential learning method for the experimental group and the traditional centred method for the control group. Experiential learning method applied in experimental group was organised with well-structured activities appropriate to concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. At the concrete experience phase, the study made use of the

questionnaire prepared on the English course topic. At the reflective observation phase, the study lodged activities such as brainstorming and problem solving relevant to the subject. At the abstract conceptualisation phase of the study, the research scholar presented the topics of Grammar and vocabulary. At the active experimentation phase, students implemented their learnt knowledge in English. Students performed their activities individually. They were provided with feedbacks by the research scholar throughout the study, which enabled them to overcome challenges they faced and comprehend their ideas. Traditional centred method had been employed in the control group, and the students had been formerly given the instructions showing detailed information about the aim of the study, how to do it and how to analyse the data. The findings of the research study had been used to verify the ideas which had been known previously.

d) Data Analysis

Difference between the pre and post-test scores obtained from the control and experimental groups had been analysed. During the data analysis, non-parametric tests were used as the number of samples was below the advised number in the literature and it did not meet the normality assumptions. In analysis, the effect of experiential Learning on academic achievement of the data, potential difference between control and treatment groups before and after the application was assessed via the Mann-Whitney U-Test. After the experiential learning and traditional centred learning, the difference between the pre and post-test scores was analysed through the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

Findings

Academic achievement test score averages of experimental group students taught through experiential learning method and of the control group students who were taught according to the traditional centred method were analysed through the Mann Whitney U-test. According to the analysis results, there was not a statistically significant difference between the pre-test scores of control and treatment groups ($U=189.50$; $p>0.05$). This conclusion shows that there was no significant difference between the knowledge levels of the control and treatment group students before the application. The difference between the pre and post-test average scores of students was analysed according to the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test. The average scores of students obtained from the academic achievement test increased after the applications ($Z: -3.935$; $Z: -3.630$; $p<0.01$). This result shows that the experiential learning method applied to the experimental group was effective in the increase in the level of the academic achievement of students. Average post-test scores of students obtained at the end of the traditional centred or experiential method applications were analysed through the Mann Whitney U-test which indicates that there was a statistically significant difference between the post-test academic achievement scores of the students at the control and experimental groups ($U=92.00$; $p<0.05$). This result shows that the average scores of academic achievement post-test results obtained by the students at the experimental group, who were taught through the experiential learning method were higher than those of the students at the control group, who received traditional centred teaching and this indicated a statistically significant difference favouring the experimental group.

Discussion

This study investigated the effects of teaching through experiential learning method on academic achievement in English. It is concluded that experiential learning method is effective on academic achievement. During the experiential learning method implemented in the teaching of English, students participated in discussions and problem solving activities to develop perspectives towards improvement in English. They attained practical knowledge through the explanations and summarisations of the research scholar. They implemented the learnt knowledge by solving their English question paper well for their final exam. The findings of the present study is supported by the related research in the literature which reveal the positive effect of experiential learning on academic achievement, meaningful learning and learning outcomes. The role of the teacher has changed in today's educational life in either experiential learning method or other teaching activities. This research is important as it enables teachers of the future to know modern teaching activities, learn about the types of activities within this teaching method and implement all these experiences in their teaching profession.

Suggestion and Conclusion

The most important factor of an education system is the teacher with no doubt. The effective power of teachers on students and educational programs is stronger than other factors. In this respect, in this study the research scholar planned to serve the aim of improving the academic achievement of students and it was found that experiential learning method was effective on academic achievement in English subject. Individual experiences are prominent in experiential learning. Therefore, this study is important as it organises significant experiences for students in terms of their individual requirements, presents them with the opportunity to think deeply, improves their problem solving and decision making skills and encourages them to implement the new ideas as products of their experiences. Additionally, this study is believed to contribute to the literature by attracting the attention of students, motivating them, improving their study skills and preparing them for the following stages of learning and improving their academic achievement. It is suggested that the effect of experiential learning can also be examined with a sample comprising high school students. The research about the effects of experiential learning can be carried out in other disciplines as well. The impact of experiential learning on other variables can be identified.

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