

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS AMONG ADOLESCENTS THROUGH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL

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Abstract

Experiential learning is the process of making meaning from direct experience and requires less teacher influence and relates solely to the meaning making process of the individual from direct experiences. Social skills are learned behaviour that allows people to achieve social reinforcement and to avoid social punishment. It's a matter of dealing with the people around. Adolescents need these skills more, compared to other categories, because they need to interact more with the society. A study was conducted to identify the social skills and the effectiveness of Experiential model in developing these skills. A sample of 244 adolescents students were taken for this study and found that the said model is effective in developing the social skills.

Keywords: *Experiential Learning Model, Social Skills, Adolescents, etc*

Introduction

Experiential learning is the process of making meaning from direct experience. It requires less teacher influence and relates solely to the meaning making process of the individual from direct experiences. Experiential learning has been shown to have a favourable impact on pupils' social development in the areas of inter-personal skills, co-operation, empathy, acceptance and awareness of diverse cultures and peer-group affiliation. This type of interaction is rare in our class-room setting. Education should aim at making each individual socially efficient (Dewey, 1950). A socially efficient person can contribute a lot to the progress of the society. Experiential Learning has the capacity to help pupils' to be more closer and feel more positive about their school experience.

A social skill is any skill facilitating interaction and communication with others (Goleman, 2006). To the behaviourists, social skills are learned behaviour that allows people to achieve social reinforcement and to avoid social punishment. It's a matter of dealing with the people around. Assertiveness is the form of acting that allows a person to act on their most important interests, defended without anxiety to express honest feelings comfortably, or to exercise personal rights without denying others. All have the same rights assertive, which ended when they begin to value others (Jain, 2002). And the person getting more internalized, will be a psychologically healthy person. These rights include: Right to judge our own abilities, To say no without feeling guilty, To have political beliefs, Not to justify ourselves before others decide what to do with our time and property, To be independent, and to expect others to be treated with dignity and say "do not understand".

Background of the Study

David Kolb and Roger Fry (1975) argue that effective learning entails the possession of four different abilities: concrete experience abilities, reflective observation abilities, abstract conceptualization abilities and active experimentation abilities. Only a few can approach the 'ideal' in this respect and tend to develop a strength in, or orientation to. As a result they developed a Learning Style Inventory (Kolb, 1999) which was designed to place people on a line between concrete experience and abstract conceptualization; and active experimentation and reflective observation.

Kolb's model is built upon the idea that learning preference can be described using two continuums; active experimentation-reflective observation and abstract conceptualization-concrete experience. The result is four types of learners: converger (active experimentation-abstract conceptualization), accommodator (active experimentation-concrete experience), assimilator (reflective observation-abstract conceptualization), and diverger (reflective observation-concrete experience).

Kolb represented the above-mentioned elements in the Experiential Learning Circle that involves: Concrete Experience – (CE), Reflective Observation – (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). In the cyclical model, the learning process often begins with a person's actual experience. Then discussion centres on processing that experience by recounting facts related to the experience. Once that is done, the discussion moves to creating a hypothesis regarding the experience drawing from what was learned. This cycle ends with the person testing this hypothesis and the next time when he or she has a similar experience, the process repeats itself each time with deepened understanding and learning.

Kolb's Experiential Learning Model works in a four-stage cycle consisting of Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC) and Active Experimentation (AE) and a four-type definition of learning styles, each representing the combination of two preferred styles, such as Diverging (CE/RO), Assimilating (AC/RO), Converging (AC/AE) and Accommodating (CE/AE). The four-stage cycle including the four learning styles is considered for the present study. Experiential learning has shown a favourable impact on pupils' social development in the areas of inter-personal skills, co-operation, empathy, acceptance and awareness of diverse cultures and peer-group affiliation. A socially and emotionally efficient person can contribute a lot to the progress of the society. Experiential Learning has the capacity to help students to solve their problems and feel more positive about their experiences.

In this study, the major Social Skills such as; Influence, Communication, Conflict Management, Leadership, Change Catalyst, Building Bonds, Collaboration and Cooperation, and Team Capabilities are considered. These competencies are to be developed through an apt pedagogic practice for the betterment of the student life and society.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To identify the Social Skills of adolescents.
- ii. To test the effectiveness of the Experiential Learning Model (ELM) over Activity Oriented Method (AOM) in developing Social Skills among adolescents.

Methodology

The study was conducted using experimental method and the investigator selected Pretest Posttest Non-equivalent Groups design. The pretest was given to the students of both experimental and control groups. The treatment given to the standard nine students under the experimental group was in the form of 15 lessons of 45 minutes each, using Experiential Learning Model to develop Social Skills among standard nine students. For the control group 15 lessons of 45 minutes each, was given under Activity Oriented Method. The posttest was given to both groups after the treatment.

The area of the study was Kottayam District of Kerala State. For the experiment, three schools were selected from Kottayam district, giving due weightage to gender and type of management of the school. The

sample for the experiment consists of 244 students of standard nine from six divisions of the three secondary schools. Both the experimental and the control group consisted of 122 students. The experimental group was taught using Kolb's Experiential Learning Model and the control group taught using Activity Oriented Method. The groups were divided based on their learning styles and equated statistically using ANCOVA and by comparing the pre-test scores on Social Skills.

The major tools used in the study are; Instructional Materials based on Experiential Learning Model and Activity Oriented Method (prepared by the investigator), and Social Skills Scale (prepared and validated by the investigators)

Analysis and Findings

Identification of Social Skills of adolescents

Table: 1

Social Skills of students in the Experimental and Control groups before the experiment

Social Skills	Experimental Group (N=122)		Control Group (N=122)		Total	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Social Skills	95.52	9.39	95.83	9.50	95.67	9.43

From the above table, it is clear that the mean score on Social skills (95.52 and 95.83) of the students did not differ very much before experiment. It is concluded that the Social Skills of students are average before the experiment.

Effectiveness of Experiential Learning Model (ELM) over the existing method of teaching (Activity Oriented Method - AOM) in developing Social Skills

Table 2

Data and Result of Test of Significance of the Difference in the Mean Post-test scores of the Social Skills of students using 't' test

Variables	Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t-value	p
Social Skills	Experimental (ELM)	122	102.99	11.04	242	4.77	0.00**
	Control (AOM)	122	96.78	9.22			

** significant at 0.01 level

The scores of Social Skills are given in the above table. The post test scores on social skills (4.77) are higher than that of the table value at 0.01 level. From the above table, it can be concluded that all the p value is significant. That is, the mean values for all sub-variables differ considerably. By comparing means of the post test scores of the experimental and the control groups, it is clear that the Experiential Learning model is effective in developing the Social Skills among adolescents.

Major Findings of the Study

Identification of Social Skills of students

1. The mean score of Social skills (95.52 and 95.83) of the students in the experimental and the control groups did not differ very much.

Effectiveness of Experiential Learning Model (ELM) over the Activity Oriented Method of teaching (AOM) with respect to Social Skills

2. There is significant difference in the post-test scores on Social Skills of students of experimental and control groups. The post test scores and their 't' values on Social skills (4.77) are higher than that of the table value at 0.01 level. By comparing means of the post test scores of the experimental and the control groups, it is clear that the experiential Learning model is effective in developing the Social Skills.

Educational Implications & Suggestions for further Research

It was categorically proved that the application of Experiential Learning Model was far superior to activity oriented method in developing social skills among students. The following implications are arrived at based on the findings of the study.

- i. The Experiential Learning Model is more effective than the Activity Oriented Method in developing Social Skills among adolescents. Therefore, Experiential Learning Model should be introduced at secondary level.
- ii. Instructional materials on Experiential Learning Model for developing Social Skills can be used by other researchers and teachers. Tools constructed can be further used for related studies to identify the Social Skills of students of different categories.
- iii. Training the students in Experiential Learning will enhance the affective domain competencies of the future generation through modeling and transfer. The learning styles of students should be there in mind of the teacher while handling the areas of social concern.
- iv. Introducing Experiential Learning Model in faculty improvement programmes namely, orientation classes, refresher courses, seminars and workshops will give a positive outlook on the areas of current concern and will positively transfer all the Social Skills to the students in the coming generations.
- v. As the study has established the effectiveness of the Experiential Learning Model, the existing teachers and trainees can be given orientation and training on the development of instructional materials based on Experiential Learning Model. The NCERT, SCERT and DIETs should take up the responsibility of developing instructional materials to develop the Social Skills of students at different levels.
- vi. The present teacher training institutions can incorporate the components of Social Skills and the techniques of experiential learning in their training procedure and curriculum and thereby, the would-be/future teachers will get adequate knowledge and skills with respect to affective domain competencies.

From this study, it is found that experiential learning is a highly effective educational method and engages the learner at a more personal level by addressing the needs and wants of the individual. Experiential learning requires qualities such as self awareness, self-initiative and self-evaluation. For experiential learning to be truly effective, it should employ the whole learning wheel, from goal setting, to experimenting and observing, to reviewing, and finally action planning. This complete process allows one to learn new skills, new attitudes or even entirely new ways of thinking. In conclusion, substantial methodological advances are needed before some aspects of socio-emotional functioning among children and adolescents, through this, the peer relationships can be addressed adequately. However, there are several other domains, that could be studied immediately.

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