

Experiential learning on the learners' literacy level

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Abstract

Experiential learning is a hands-on approach to education where learners gain knowledge and skills through direct experience and reflection on those experiences. This study explored the effectiveness of experiential learning in enhancing learners' literacy levels. Employing a descriptive survey design, the research assessed the current situation within the study area, providing a detailed and accurate picture of the characteristics and behaviors of the learners. The respondents of the study were learners from Lumban Central Elementary School, Lumban Sub-office, Division of Laguna, selected through random sampling. The findings indicated that the application of experiential learning strategies significantly impacts learners' literacy levels and engagement. Experiential learning not only raises literacy levels but also creates a more engaging learning environment. It motivates teachers to explore innovative teaching practices and fosters stronger relationships between parents, students, and the community, thereby building a supportive learning ecosystem. Based on the findings, the study concluded that experiential learning is an effective strategy for enhancing literacy levels. It recommends regular assessment of experiential learning's effectiveness, continuous professional development for teachers, and active parental involvement in experiential learning activities. These recommendations aim to further improve literacy outcomes and create a more engaging and supportive educational environment.

Keywords: Experiential learning; literacy levels; educational strategies; learner engagement

1. Introduction

In the field of education, enhancing the literacy levels of learners is crucial for academic success. However, if the teachers are solely using traditional methods of teaching and are not keeping up with the changes in the educational field, the learners may not be able to fully succeed in academic achievement. Experiential learning on the learners' literacy level involves providing learners with authentic and real-world literacy experiences.

Literacy, as a fundamental skill, plays a crucial role in individuals' personal, academic, and professional lives. It encompasses the ability to read, write, comprehend, and communicate effectively. Traditional approaches to literacy education often focus on rote memorization, drills, and isolated skill practice. However, research suggests that experiential learning can offer a more holistic and meaningful approach to developing literacy skills. Literacy, is the capacity to communicate using inscribed, printed, or electronic signs or symbols for representing language (Foley, 2024).

There are various ways in which experiential learning varies from traditional education. First, it prioritizes active participation and learning by doing above memory and passive listening. Engaging in active engagement facilitates a more profound comprehension and retention of knowledge. Second, reflection is incorporated into experiential learning as an essential part. Following the experience, students are encouraged to consider what they have learned, how it connects to ideas in the classroom, how it aligns with their personal values, and how they might use it in various situations. Finally, experiential learning encourages communication and cooperation among students. Students can share ideas, learn from one another, and hone

their interpersonal skills because of this collaborative aspect.

When students participate in experiential education opportunities, they gain A better understanding of course material, a broader view of the world and an appreciation of community, insight into their own skills, interests, passions, and values, opportunities to collaborate with diverse organizations and people, positive professional practices and skill sets, the gratification of assisting in meeting community needs, and self-confidence and leadership skills (Kent State University, 2024).

Students are better able to relate concepts and information acquired in the classroom to actual circumstances when they are involved in practical activities and reflection. This teaching approach has a strong emphasis on practical application and hands-on learning, which can improve comprehension and memory of the content. Students can improve their capacity to apply knowledge to real-world circumstances and develop critical thinking and problem-solving abilities by participating in experiential learning.

Acquiring knowledge through practical experience. The experiential learning theory is based on this. The core principle of experiential learning is that learning is best achieved via hands-on experiences. Then, those encounters remain in memory and aid in the retention of knowledge and facts.

The study aimed to investigate the impact of experiential learning on learners' literacy levels and identify the factors that contribute to effective experiential learning. Additionally, this study aims to identify best practices and strategies that can optimize the integration of experiential learning in literacy instruction.

1.a. Background of the Study

Literacy is a fundamental skill that plays a crucial role in individuals' personal, academic, and professional lives. Literacy is the ability to read, write, speak, and listen in ways that will allow us to communicate effectively to a variety of different audiences and to make sense of the world. Reading and writing, when integrated with speaking, listening viewing, and critical thinking, constitute valued aspects of literacy in modern life. Literacy is a critical component to ensure all students have the best chance to succeed in their studies and everyday life.

By participating in experiential learning, students are engaged in authentic learning experiences that position them as active participants in their learning. They develop the ability to bridge the gap between theory and practice and integrate learning beyond the classroom. Experiential learning can increase student engagement, improve learning effectiveness, and enhance work and life skills (The University of Queensland, 2021). Experiential learning is an instructional approach that emphasizes active engagement, hands-on experiences, and real-world application of knowledge. It encourages learners to actively participate in their own learning process, making connections between theoretical concepts and practical experiences. By immersing learners in authentic literacy experiences, experiential learning aims to enhance their understanding, motivation, and overall literacy proficiency.

Experiential learning theory is distinct from behavioral and cognitive theories in that the latter emphasizes the potential influence of subjective experience on learning, whilst cognitive theories highlight the importance of mental processes. People might discover their learning abilities when they are learning new things with the aid of experiential learning. This idea discusses how students can build on their areas of weakness as well as play to their strengths.

Effective literacy skills open the doors to more educational and employment opportunities so that people can pull themselves out of poverty and chronic underemployment. In this increasingly complex and rapidly changing technological world, it is essential that individuals continuously expand their knowledge and learn new skills to keep up with the pace of change.

While there is a growing body of research on experiential learning in various educational contexts, there is still a need for more studies specifically focusing on its impact on learners' literacy levels. The experiential learning theory does not adequately address the role that non-reflective experience plays in the learning process. While the theory is good at analyzing how learning occurs for individuals, it does little to

look at learning that occurs in larger social groups (Cherry, 2022).

This study will explore the effectiveness of experiential learning in enhancing learners' literacy levels. The findings of this research will provide evidence-based recommendations, contributing to the improvement of literacy teaching and the development of proficient and confident learners.

2. Literature Review

Acquiring literacy is not just a one-off act. Beyond its conventional concept of reading, writing, and counting skills, literacy is now understood as a means of identification, understanding, interpretation, creation, and communication in an increasingly digital, text-mediated, information-rich, and fast-changing world. Literacy is a continuum of learning and proficiency in reading, writing, and using numbers throughout life, and is part of a larger set of skills, including digital skills, media literacy, education for sustainable development, global citizenship, and job-specific skills. Literacy skills are expanding and evolving as people increasingly engage in information and learning through digital technology.

Literacy empowers and liberates people. Beyond its importance as part of the right to education, literacy improves lives by expanding capabilities, which in turn reduces poverty, increases participation in the labor market, and has positive effects on health and sustainable development. Women empowered by literacy have a positive ripple effect on all aspects of development. They have greater life choices for themselves and an immediate impact on the health and education of their families, particularly the education of girls. UNESCO defines digital literacy as the ability to access, manage, understand, integrate, communicate, evaluate, and create information safely and appropriately using digital technologies for employment, decent jobs, and entrepreneurship. It includes skills such as computer literacy, ICT literacy, information literacy, and media literacy, which aim to empower people, particularly youth, to adopt a critical mindset when engaging with information and digital technologies and to build resilience in the face of disinformation, hate speech, and violent extremism (UNESCO, 2024).

Literacy development is the process of learning words, sounds, and languages. Children develop literacy skills to learn to read and write confidently, and eventually improve their overall communication skills. The stages of literacy development that a child goes through can vary depending on the child's comprehension level, but generally include the same key concepts along the way. Understanding literacy development in children as educators is key to helping children master the core skills that set them up for their education. With an understanding of literacy development and how to address each stage of literacy development, educators and students alike will be set up for success in the classroom. As the pillar of language and reading skills, literacy development is a crucial time in a child's life. Educators need to understand why literacy development is important to effectively help children within each stage of early literacy development. As a child grows older and demonstrates the key stages of literacy development, they improve their reading and writing abilities. The five stages of literacy development included emergent literacy, alphabetic fluency, words and patterns, intermediate reading, and advanced reading. Each stage of literacy development helps children move forward and become stronger students. Keep in mind that a child's current age group doesn't necessarily mean that they're at that step in their early literacy development (Learning Without Tears, 2021).

Literacy in education is the foundation for all other academic knowledge and skills. Learning to read with comprehension and write effectively opens the door to shared knowledge, understanding, communication, and critical thinking. This broader view influences our perception of our world and how it impacts us. Literacy skills are critical to education since they influence students' abilities to learn about challenging topics, communicate thoughtfully, and retain information. Teachers are crucial in helping students fully develop these skills. When educators create an environment where literacy is a priority, students are empowered to become engaged learners. Learning environments that promote literacy not only help students

become proficient in reading and writing, it also help them understand and gain other forms of literacy, including digital, media, health, and more. With new technological advancements, educators with access to digital education tools can leverage them to create engaging learning environments. Striving to create these types of environments and ensuring that people are equipped with literacy skills is critical in allowing them to become successful professionals, opening pathways to socioeconomic mobility and overall improved well-being (Smith, 2023).

Literacy can be regarded as empowering because it greatly affects how an individual may function in a society. Traditionally, literacy was viewed as the ability of an individual to read and write. In the present time, it pertains to the possessed knowledge and the competence of a person to particular discipline or area. The ability to read, write, speak, listen, conceptualize, and innovate paves way to a multitude of opportunities to a person. For a very long time, educators have been interested in problems, issues, and trends in literacy education because they believe that “literacy encompasses the knowledge and skills students need to access, understand, analyze, and evaluate information; make meaning; express thoughts and emotions; present ideas and opinions; interact with others; and participate in activities at school and in their lives beyond school.

Literacy trends fluctuated over time. However, since the new millennium, significant changes have resulted in the field redirecting attention to many topics that were perhaps overlooked in the past. It is clear that not only three of the five pillars of reading education (fluency, phonemic awareness, and phonics) received less attention in the Philippines; thus, only comprehension was regarded as the forefront issue. Indeed, other aspects of literacy are currently receiving greater attention, such as differentiated instruction, adolescent literacy, localized texts, and diagnostic tests. Those in the field of literacy have long known the value of comprehension and believe that it should be the primary focus of every literacy program. This study also stresses the vitality of including people (such as reading experts, teachers, and administrators) in determining literacy issues that are important and need immediate attention. In addition, educators can utilize the findings of this survey to adjust their instruction and direct attention to necessary areas within their own schools (Gatcho & Gutierrez, 2018).

Experiential learning, a pedagogical approach steeped in active engagement and reflection, offers learners a transformative journey. It is a philosophy of education that places the learner at the center of experience, fostering the development of knowledge, skills, and values through direct interaction with the world around them. This approach, often described as 'learning by doing,' encourages learners to immerse themselves in an experience and then reflect on it to gain new insights or skills. It is a dynamic process that transcends traditional lecture-based instruction, allowing learners to connect theory with practice meaningfully. Experiential learning can take many forms, from outdoor adventures and workplace simulations, to role-playing exercises and community service projects. These activities not only provide practical, hands-on experience, but also stimulate creativity, enhance decision-making capabilities, and foster critical thinking skills.

The experiential learning approach is different from other common learning styles, as it is a process of learning that is examined in a traditional classroom setting by engaging with learners in group projects, classroom discussions, observing learners in lectures, or other activities. In the online environment, it is crucial to determine how to engage learners through the entire learning cycle and integrate prompts or activities that will help reveal the learning preferences of students in a course. It is recommended to use a wide range of learning experiences to fulfil the learning preferences of each student (Main, 2023).

Unlike traditional classroom situations, where students may compete with one another or remain uninvolved or unmotivated and where the instruction is highly structured, students in experiential learning situations cooperate and learn from one another in a more semi-structured approach. Instruction is designed to engage students in direct experiences tied to real-world problems and situations in which the instructor facilitates rather than directs student progress. Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported through reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis. Experiences are structured to require the student to take initiative, make decisions, and be accountable for the results. Throughout the experiential

learning process, students are actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, curiosity, solving problems, assuming responsibility, creativity, and constructing meaning. Students engage intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully, and/or physically. This involvement produces the perception that a learning task is authentic.

The results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experiences and learning. Relationships were developed and nurtured: student to self, student to others, and student to the world at large. Students share the results, reactions, and observations with their peers. Students will also get other peers to talk about their own experiences, share their reactions and observations, and discuss the feelings generated by the experience. Sharing equates to reflecting on what they discovered and relating it to past experiences that can be used in the future. Students will discuss, analyze, and reflect on their experiences. Describing and analyzing their experiences allows students to relate them to future learning experiences. Students will also discuss how the experience was carried out and how themes, problems, and issues emerged as a result. Students will discuss how specific problems or issues are addressed and identify recurring themes (Northern Illinois University 2020).

Education has long been a cornerstone of human development, and various methodologies have been employed to impart knowledge to eager minds. The traditional approach of lecturing and testing has been the dominant method in most educational systems. However, experiential learning, which emphasizes the importance of hands-on experience and real-world applications, has proven to be a more effective way of teaching. As Aristotle once said, "For the things we have to learn before we can do them, we learn by doing them." This statement embodies the essence of experiential learning, in which students actively participate in their own education by engaging in meaningful activities that allow them to experience concepts first. By immersing learners in authentic situations, they can develop critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making skills that are essential for success in today's dynamic world.

The significance of experiential learning has been recognized by many educational thought leaders, including John Dewey, David Kolb, and Paulo Freire. Their collective work highlights the importance of making connections between classroom learning and real-life experiences, fostering a deeper understanding of various subjects. Furthermore, numerous studies have demonstrated that experiential learning leads to better retention, increased motivation, and improved problem-solving skills than traditional lecture-based methods. Experiential learning has the power to evoke strong emotions in learners as they are directly involved in the process of acquiring knowledge. By participating in hands-on activities and projects, students forge strong connections to the subject matter, which can inspire lifelong love of learning (Winkel, 2023).

The distinguishing feature of experience-based learning (or experiential learning¹) is that the experience of the learner occupies a central place in all the considerations of teaching and learning. This experience may comprise earlier events in the life of the learner, current life events, or events arising from the learner's participation in activities implemented by teachers and facilitators. A key element of experience-based learning (henceforth referred to as EBL) is that learners analyze their experience by reflecting, evaluating, and reconstructing it (sometimes individually, sometimes collectively, and sometimes both) to draw meaning from it in the light of prior experience. This review of their experiences may lead to further action.

All learning necessarily involves an experience of some sort, prior, and/or current. However, scrutiny of many contemporary teaching and training practices might lead one to think otherwise. Much of the impetus for EBL has been a reaction against an approach to learning that is overly didactic, teacher-controlled, and involves a discipline-constrained transmission of knowledge. It supports a more participative, learner-centered approach, which emphasizes direct engagement, rich learning events, and the construction of meaning by learners. EBL is of particular interest to adult educators because it encompasses formal, informal, non-formal, lifelong, incidental, and workplace learning. EBL is not limited to being a mere 'method' or 'technique' or even a particular 'approach'; it is as wide and deep as education itself. Although there is no single way to identify the EBL process, there are some criteria that need to be fulfilled if teaching and learning activities are

labeled 'experience-based.' Implementing EBL in formal education is generally associated with negotiated curricula and leads to increases in student self-concept and greater awareness of the implicit ethical considerations in teaching and learning (Andresen et. al., 2020).

Experiential learning involves learning by doing, which may include self-directed learning activities. Helping learners make sense of their experiences is foundational to adult learning. There are four key elements of experiential learning: concrete experience, reflection and observation, the development of new ideas, and experimenting with new ideas. Active participation in experiential learning benefits both learners and their communities. Adult learners gain concrete experiences and reflect on them by comparing their new experiences with their Background Knowledge. It fosters the upgrading of life skills, such as respect for diversity and exposure to multiple perspectives, and offers opportunities for critical reflection and Cognitive Flexibility. Experiential learning can also foster personal autonomy, self-fulfillment, interpersonal effectiveness, Social Awareness and Relationship Skills.

Experiential learning makes it possible for learners to face unknown situations and problems in real-world contexts. To make a decision, learners often need to consider what they know, what they do not know, and how they can learn. This motivates learners to reflect on their knowledge, transfer Background Knowledge to a new context, acquire new ideas, improve their Oral Communication Skills, and build a Learner Mindset. It is important to note that the instructor moves into the role of a facilitator rather than directing students' progress, often through higher-level questioning. Designing experiential learning to provoke natural curiosity and emotional highs can lead to higher engagement and motivation levels. Six themes characterized more positive emotions in experiential learning: first-time experiences, unknown, unexpected discoveries, being on a journey, sense of change, and meaningful learning. These elements can lead to a sense of enrichment, expansion, and development among adult learners. Ethical design will ensure the following: informed student choice with authentic options; avoiding bias in debriefing questions and expectations; debriefing that maximizes reflection and concept development; transparency that avoids deception; and meaningful feedback with an asset lens.

Experiential learning opportunities that allow learners to apply their learning to long-term projects or jobs outside the classroom are the key to workforce success. Examples of experiential learning include case studies, projects, internships, creative performance exhibits, project-based learning, field experience, hackathons, laboratories, place-based education, pitch competitions, clinical rounds, job shadowing, co-ops, practicums, service learning, simulations, studios, community-engaged research, and international learning experiences (Lambrecht 2021).

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 highlights that in all stages, experiential learning will be adopted, including hands-on learning, arts-integrated and sports-integrated education, and story-telling-based pedagogy, among others, as standard pedagogy within each subject, and with explorations of relations among different subjects. Today, experiential learning has become an essential method in all innovative pedagogical practices, as it holistically strives to shift the child from rote learning and memorization to learning by doing through experience and activity. This is of utmost importance in the context of the current and future demands in the wake of sweeping changes due to technological revolution. The world has changed rapidly; robotics, artificial intelligence, data science, internet of things, zenomics, mobile computing, crowdsourcing, autonomous vehicles, and virtual reality are impacting every aspect of life very quickly. In order to live up to these changes, education needs to focus more on learning, which is experimental, experimental, and experiential, rather than being limited to the traditional methods of knowledge gathering and transmission. To meet the demands of the world that have changed education from the foundational years should provide knowledge, understanding, and skills to develop qualities of creativity, critical thinking, communication, leadership, decision-making, self-regulation, and problem-solving skills among children. In this context, NEP's emphasis on the experiential methodology of learning in schools is a positive step in this direction. Experiential learning focuses on the practical application of knowledge and skills to real-world experiences in order to further increase learners' knowledge and develop competence in skills and behaviors. It is effectively

used in schools, higher education, therapy, corporate training, and other areas for educational learning, personal development, and skill building (Dutta, 2021).

The education reformer John Dewey, also regarded as the modern father of experiential education, is often seen as the proponent of learning by doing rather than learning by passively receiving. He suggested that one's present experiences are a direct result of how one's previous experiences interrupt and influence the present situation. Psychologist Kurt Lewin developed cornerstone models for understanding organizational change in which he depicts three stages in the process of change: unfreeze – change – refreeze. Clinical psychologist Jean Piaget, known for his pioneering work in child development, believed that the principal goal of education in schools should be to create men and women who are capable of doing new things, not simply repeating what other generations have done but people who are creative, inventive, and discoverers, who can be critical and verify, and not accept, everything they are offered. He also quoted, Intelligence is what you use when you do not know what to do. He proposed the concept of Cognitive Development, which explains how children construct mental models of the world. According to him, intelligence is never a fixed trait; rather, cognitive development is a process that takes place due to biological maturity and interaction with the environment (Dutta, 2021).

The goal of the study by Ismail (2022) is to expand the use of experiential learning in students' reading comprehension. The method used in this study is called a "pre-experiment." The pre-test, treatment, and post-test were all included. The purpose of the initial pre-test was to learn more about the audience before reading. Treatment is the implementation of experiential learning theory in the learning-to-learn program, which is done roughly three times. The purpose of the final post-test was to understand how students learn after being instructed using experiential learning theory. Matriculants in the second semester of the STKIP Kie Raha Ternate English language program for the academic year 2020–2021 constituted the majority of this study. Population: 172 students. The research was applied Purposive sampling is used in this study. It is meant that the researchers choose one class which consists of 30 students. The result can be reported that the students' achievement in reading in pretest was classified as poor ($X_1 = 5,3$) and the students' achievement in reading posttest was classified as good score were ($X_2 = 7.83$). For the level of significance ($P = 0,05$ and degree of freedom ($df = N - 1$ (29), then the value of t-table ($25.3 > 2.045$). It means that, there was significant difference between the pretest and posttest score of the students' reading comprehension by Experiential learning theory. In other words, the Null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected and the alternative hypothesis (H_1) is accepted. From the analysis above, the researchers concluded that there was significance different between the score that got by students in pretest and posttest in learning reading comprehension by Experiential learning theory.

Due to the birth of positive psychology in the process of education, classroom engagement has been flourished and got a remarkable role in the academic field. The other significant determining factor of success in education is motivation which is in line with classroom engagement. Moreover, based on the constructivist approach, experiential learning (EL) as a new method in education and a learner-centric pedagogy is at the center of attention, as a result of its contributions to improving the value of education which centers on developing abilities, and experiences (Chen & Xiao, 2021).

Moreover, students' dissatisfaction, boredom, negative experiences, and dropping out of school are in part due to the low engagement in academic activities (Derakhshan et al., 2021). It has been demonstrated that engagement is, directly and indirectly, related to intelligence, interest, motivation, and pleasure with learning outcomes within many academic fields (Yin, 2018). Likewise, engagement is a construct that is shaped from the multifaceted relations of perceptions, feelings, and motivation which is corresponding to the progress of self-determination theory in the motivation realm (Mercer and Dörnyei, 2020). Besides, the student's motivation is a significant factor in cultivating learning and consequently increasing the value of higher education because the more the learners are motivated, the more likely they can be successful in their activities (Derakhshan et al., 2020; Halif et al., 2020).

One of the greatest challenges we face as instructors is how to make our students active learners. We

can provide stimulating lectures that use real-world examples to make material relevant to the students, we can incorporate multimedia to keep them interested, and we can encourage discussion. Despite these efforts, however, the fact remains that many of our students are passive recipients of knowledge and information in our classes. The question then emerges, what can we do to better involve students in the learning process so that they develop the skills that will serve them well after graduation? We have found that one of the most successful ways to promote active learning is by offering students the possibility to engage more directly with course material through experiential learning. Experiential learning is defined as a pedagogical method whereby students engage in professional and productive learning activities. It is a process through which the learner directly constructs knowledge and includes activities that require the learner to actively engage with and critically reflect on the subject being studied. In addition to improving students' analytical abilities, experiential learning programs provide a unique opportunity for students to work on skills that are hard to replicate in a traditional classroom, yet will be required for success in their careers after graduation (Bradberry & De Maio, 2019).

Experiential learning is a learner-facilitating tool that has not been sufficiently explored in Higher education institutions in Oman. There is a growing body of literature that recognises the importance of 'learning by doing,' 'hands-on approach' or 'experiential learning.' Experiential learning grew in popularity with adult learners since the time of Dewey and progressed with several scholars researching on the potential benefits of applying experiential learning methods in vocational and technical training institutions. The notion that knowledge is gained through active involvement in a specific task is a construct that has been researched in the present study. It endeavours to foster learner autonomy through the implementation of instructional tasks based on Kolb's experiential learning cycle. The main objective was to observe the change in perceptions of learners on their autonomous behaviour before and after the intervention. Through convenience sampling of 60 undergraduate students, enrolled for various pathways on the business programme were selected for this study. The quantitative data was collected by administering a learner autonomy questionnaire and a set of self designed experiential learning classroom activities. The findings of the study revealed that experiential learning cycle activities implicitly fostered learner autonomy and enabled learning necessary skills for the workplace (Boggu & Sundarsingh, 2019).

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) is an applicable theoretical foundation to investigate learners' satisfaction in flipped settings. Based on the ELT, we proposed that personalized learning climate (flipped design) and relevant prior learning experience (angle from learners) have close relationship with learner satisfaction. Additionally, the ELT considers learning as a process carried out under the stimuli of the learner's own direct experience or reacting from external observation, and knowledge is created through the transformation of experience (Zhai et. al., 2017).

2.a. Theoretical Framework

The present study focuses on experiential learning and its impact on learners' literacy levels. The study is based on several theoretical frameworks, including Constructivist Theory, Inquiry-Based Learning, Sociocultural Theory, Multiple Intelligences, and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

One related theory of experiential learning on learners' literacy levels is Constructivist Theory. Constructivist theory is based on the idea that learners are active participants in their learning journey, and knowledge is constructed based on experiences. As events occur, each person reflects on their experiences and incorporates new ideas into their prior knowledge. Learners develop schemas to organize their knowledge. This model was entrenched in learning theories by Dewey, Piaget, Vygotsky, Gagne, and Bruner (Kurt, 2021). The theory of constructivist learning relates to the present study because it is vital to understanding how students learn. The idea that students actively construct their knowledge is central to constructivism. Constructivism emphasizes learners' active role in constructing their knowledge, and understanding, through meaningful experiences. In literacy, this theory suggests that learners should engage in

hands-on activities, such as reading and writing in authentic contexts to develop their literacy skills.

The present study is anchored on Inquiry-Based Learning. Based on John Dewey's philosophy that education begins with the curiosity of the learner, inquiry in the classroom places the responsibility for learning on the students and encourages them to arrive at an understanding of concepts by themselves. Students are supported in developing their abilities to: ask good questions, determine what needs to be learned and what resources are required to answer those questions and share their learning with others (Queen's University, 2020). This fosters critical thinking and problem-solving abilities by motivating students to actively explore and research topics of interest. Within the literacy domain, inquiry-based learning entails providing students with real-world reading and writing experiences that stimulate inquiry, research, and reflection.

Another related theory is sociocultural theory, which emphasizes the role of social interaction and cultural context in learning. Lev Vygotsky believed that human development depends on social interaction and can significantly differ between cultures. The sociocultural theory is a sociological and psychological theory that deals with the importance of culture and society in developing and shaping individuals. It demonstrates how friends, parents, and others in society develop people's cognitive, learning, and sociocultural functions (Structural Learning, 2023). The sociocultural idea states that individuals who play mentor roles in a person's life, such as caregivers and educators, have a partial influence on that person's psychological development. In line with this idea, the social and cultural norms within the learner's community have an impact on the development of literacy. Consequently, meaningful social connections should be a part of experiential literacy acquisition.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory is also relevant to experiential learning in literacy. The historical development of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is anchored in the work of Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky, whose ideas revolutionized educational theory and child psychology. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is a pivotal concept in understanding cognitive development within educational psychology, particularly relevant for teachers shaping the learning experiences of their students. At its core, the ZPD represents the difference between what learners can do independently, which is their level of development, and what they can achieve with guidance, their potential level (Main, 2021). This concept is essential in designing supportive activities that stretch a student's capabilities just beyond their current capacity, thereby promoting cognitive growth. PD refers to the gap between what a learner can do independently and what they can achieve with the guidance and support of a more knowledgeable learner. Experiential learning should provide opportunities for learners to work within their ZPD and engage in activities that challenge and extend their current literacy skills.

Lastly, the multiple intelligence theory, developed by Howard Gardner, suggests that individuals have different types of intelligence, including linguistic intelligence. Howard Gardner first proposed the theory of multiple intelligences in his 1983 book "Frames of Mind", where he broadens the definition of intelligence and outlines several distinct types of intellectual competencies. The theory of Multiple Intelligences posits that individuals possess various distinct types of bits of intelligence, rather than a single general intelligence. These types encompass areas like linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic bits of intelligence, emphasizing a broader understanding of human capability (Marens, 2024). Experiential literacy learning should cater to learners' diverse intelligences by providing a variety of activities that tap into different forms of expression, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. This theory relates to the study because it emphasizes the importance of individualized instruction to meet learners' unique needs and strengths.

3. Research Methodology

This chapter describes and discusses the research method and procedure of the study. This includes

the research design, population and sampling, the respondents of the study, the instruments, the data gathering procedures, and the statistical treatment of data.

3.1. Research Design

This research employed a descriptive survey design, which offers the researcher the advantage of assessing the current situation within the study area during the study period.

The researcher therefore used the design to assess the experiential learning on the learners' literacy level. According to Sirisilla (2023), a descriptive research design is a powerful tool used by researchers to gather information about a particular group or phenomenon. This type of research provides a detailed and accurate picture of the characteristics and behaviors of a particular population or subject. By observing and collecting data on a given topic, descriptive research helps researchers gain a deeper understanding of a specific issue and provides valuable insights that can inform future studies.

Thus, the researcher deemed the design appropriate for the study as it allowed for the investigation of experiential learning in the area of study.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents that will be used in the study will be learners from learners of Lumban Central Elementary School, Lumban Sub-office, Division of Laguna. In selecting the respondents, the researcher used the random sampling technique.

3.2. Sampling Technique

According to Tuovila (2024) sampling is a process in statistical analysis where researchers take a predetermined number of observations from a larger population. Sampling allows researchers to conduct studies about a large group by using a small portion of the population. The method of sampling depends on the type of analysis being performed.

It can be difficult for researchers to conduct accurate studies on large populations. In some cases, it can be impossible to study every individual in the group. That's why they often choose a small portion to represent the entire group. This is called a sample. Samples allow researchers to use characteristics of the small group to make estimates of the larger population. The chosen sample should be a fair representation of the entire population.

The researcher used purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling is used in research studies to select a specific group of individuals or units for analysis. This method is appropriate when the researcher has a clear idea of the characteristics or attributes they are interested in studying and wants to select a sample representative of those characteristics (Heath, 2023). The respondents of the study were the learners in Lumban Central Elementary School, Lumban Sub-office, Division of Laguna.

Research Procedure

Once the dissertation title proposal was presented to the adviser and approved, the researcher proceeded to develop chapters 1 to 3. The research proposal will then be presented to the adviser for technical assistance to further enhance the study. Upon approval, the researcher will create questionnaires to gather the necessary data.

After the proposal is checked and approved, the researcher will obtain the required permits from the office of the school's public district supervisor and the schools division superintendent before commencing data collection. Once the researcher receives endorsement from these offices, they will proceed to distribute the questionnaires personally.

Once the questionnaires have been completed, the researcher will tally and tabulate the results. These data will serve as the basis for analysis and interpretation, leading to the final steps of summarizing the findings, drawing conclusions, and making recommendations for the research study.

3.3. Statistical Instrument of Data

The purpose of the survey questionnaires was to assess the level of experiential learning among learners and their literacy level. To achieve this, the instrument utilized the Likert scale system, which consists of a series of questions.

A questionnaire is a research tool featuring a series of questions used to collect useful information from respondents. These instruments include either written or oral questions and comprise an interview-style format. A questionnaire is a set of questions created for the purpose of gathering information; that information may not be used for a survey. However, all surveys do require questionnaires. Questionnaires are popular research methods because they offer a fast, efficient, and inexpensive means of gathering large amounts of information from sizeable sample volumes (Cint, 2022). The researcher used questionnaires to collect data from the respondents.

To address the specific problem at hand, statistical methods such as the mean, standard deviation, and regression analysis were employed.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Impact to the Learners

The initial count of non-readers in the study was 66, but after implementing the experiential learning strategy, this number significantly decreased to only 4. This remarkable reduction clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of the strategy in uplifting the learners' literacy levels. Not only did the strategy have a positive impact on literacy, but it also resulted in increased learner engagement. The learners' overall literacy skills and their active involvement in the learning process noticeably improved because of implementing the experiential learning approach. In general, the positive outcomes observed highlight the effectiveness of experiential learning in enhancing literacy skills and promoting student engagement.

It was proven from the study of Rukhsana et. al., (2022) that experiential learning method was more effective than the traditional methods of teaching. It is therefore recommended that the experience learning method should be applied for all students to increase the academic achievement of the students. Teachers should be encouraged to apply the experiential learning approach. The curriculum should also be revised. The study will be beneficial for students, teachers, curriculum developer and policy makers.

4.2. Impact to the Teachers

The teachers became more excited to use experiential learning. They exert more effort and dedication in implementing experiential learning strategies to enhance the learners' literacy levels. The use of experiential learning has ignited excitement among teachers, as they witness the positive impact it has on their students' literacy development. They witness firsthand how engaging students in hands-on, real-world experiences can greatly improve their understanding and retention of literacy concepts. The teachers feel a sense of accomplishment as they see their students grow and develop, knowing that they played a crucial role in fostering their love for learning.

It was proven from the study of Ajani (2023) that experiential learning theory is critical to teacher professional development, as it enables teachers to learn better when engaged in experientially designed professional development, which can impact their classroom teaching thereafter. The study, therefore, encourages teacher educators or government bodies responsible for content design for teachers' professional development to integrate or structure the contents of teachers' professional development with experiential learning initiatives, to improve teachers' classroom pedagogies and teaching competencies for quality education.

4.3. Impact to the Community

The community is greatly impacted by the use of experiential learning strategies to raise students' literacy levels, especially the parents. Parents have been more interested and supportive of their children's educational journeys as they observe the positive results and improvement in their literacy skills. Parents have acted to enhance their children's learning experiences by providing extra materials and resources, realizing the value of experiential learning. In addition to reinforcing the ideas and abilities taught in the classroom, this increased parental support encourages cooperation and a sense of shared responsibility for their children's literacy progress.

It was proven from the study of Đurišić & Bunijevac (2018) that to comply with the system of integrated support for their students', schools need to build partnership with parents and develop mutual responsibility for children's success in the educational system. In this way, parental involvement is increased, parents' effort to support schools are encouraged, and they are directly making a positive impact to a successful educational system. Parental involvement provides an important opportunity for schools to enrich current school programs by bringing parents into the educational process. Increased parental involvement has been shown to result in increased student success, enhanced parent and teacher satisfaction, and improved school climate. To ensure effective parental involvement, schools may have partnership programs in place that continually develop, implement, evaluate, and improve plans and practices encouraging family and community involvement.

5. Conclusion, Recommendations and Reflection

5.1. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. In conclusion, the learners' literacy levels and engagement were impacted by the application of the experiential learning strategy. One effective strategy for raising literacy levels and giving learners a more interesting learning environment is experiential learning. Experiential learning has the potential to be a very effective strategy for raising literacy levels.
2. It can be concluded that teachers are motivated to explore innovative and engaging ways to incorporate experiential learning into their teaching practices. The transformative power of experiential learning on students' literacy development serves as a driving force for teachers reinforcing their commitment to creating engaging and impactful learning experiences.
3. In conclusion, the application of experiential learning strategies to raise students' literacy levels has led to a rise in community involvement and parental support. By fostering stronger relationships between parents, students, and the community, experiential learning not only enhances literacy results for learners but also builds a good and encouraging learning ecosystem.

5.2. Recommendations

Through the conclusions drawn from the findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. It is recommended to regularly assess the effectiveness of experiential learning in improving literacy outcomes and adjust their teaching strategies accordingly. Additionally, teachers should explore and continue to integrate experiential learning strategies into their instructional practices to maximize the benefits for learners' literacy development.
2. It can be recommended that teachers continue to seek professional development opportunities that focus on experiential learning strategies. By staying current with best practices and incorporating new ideas into their teaching, teachers can further enhance the literacy development of their students. Additionally, collaboration with colleagues to share successful experiential learning activities can help inspire and support each other.
3. It is recommended to actively participate in experiential learning activities with their children. By being actively involved in their child's education, parents can better understand the importance of literacy and provide additional support. Additionally, community members can also play a role by offering resources, mentorship opportunities, etc.

5.3. Reflection

Experiential learning strategies play a crucial role in enhancing learners' literacy levels by providing them with hands-on, real-world experiences that help them make connections between what they are learning and how it applies to their everyday lives. Experiential learning allows learners to actively engage in real-world situations which can lead to a deeper understanding of the material being taught. This hands-on approach not only helps learners identify areas for improvement but also provides them with the opportunity to practice and refine their skills in a safe and supportive environment.

Making learning relevant and engaging for students is essential for promoting literacy development. Teachers who use experiential learning strategies in their classroom teaching can get more meaningful learning experiences that improve students' literacy skills. This also emphasizes the necessity for teachers to constantly change ways of teaching to fit with the various needs and interests of their students.

In experiential learning, success is no longer solely measured by the acquisition of facts. Instead, it encompasses lasting behavioral change, the development of skills and behaviors that enable individuals to respond effectively to various situations and the ability to apply acquired knowledge in practical ways. Experiential learning is indeed a powerful way to help learners identify changes required to their skills, attitudes, and behaviors, and then implement those changes for better performance.

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