Trajectory of Experiential Learning: Leading the Path towards Students' Cognitive Achievement and Classroom Engagement

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Abstract

Experiential learning contributed a lot to helping students actively participate in acquiring learning. This study aims to determine the influence of experiential learning on the students' learning engagements and academic achievements of grade 10 students in the selected secondary school of Zamboanga City Division, the first quarter of the school year 2022-2023 with 349 respondents. The data revealed that experiential learning, student engagement, and academic performance of the students are relatively on the same level where they put out their learnings on what they have experienced. Moreover, Experiential Learning significantly influences student engagement. Thus, experiential learning involves students more in the process of learning and engages them in class activities, which aids in student retention. More so, experiential learning does not significantly influence the student's academic achievement which indicates that Experiential learning is based on the process while the student's academic achievement is outcome-based. Experiential learning involves students putting more emphasis on the process of learning than the result.

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Introduction

Experiential learning involves a number of steps that offer students a hands-on, collaborative, and reflective learning experience which helps them to "fully learn new skills and knowledge" (Haynes, 2007). Although learning content is important, learning from the *process* is at the heart of experiential learning. During each step of the experience, students will engage with the content, the instructor, each other as well as self–reflect and apply what they have learned in another situation.

Students in this day and age are easily distracted. In fact, studies show that the majority of students have used their digital devices for non-classroom activities (McCoy, 2016).

Experiential learning simply means learning through experience. It focuses on students reflecting on their hands-on experience doing something, to gain practical expertise and unforgettable conceptual insight.

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 which are tied to real-world problems and situations in which the instructor facilitates rather than directs student progress. "The focus of EL is placed on the process of learning and not the product of learning" (UC Davis, 2011, para 6).

Proponents of experiential learning assert that students will be more motivated to learn when they have a personal stake in the subject rather than being assigned to review a topic or read a textbook chapter. What is essential in EL, however, is "that the phases of experiencing (doing), reflection and applying are present. In addition, "the stages of reflection and application are what make experiential learning different and more powerful than the models commonly referred to as 'learn-by-doing' or 'hands-on-learning'" (UC Davis, 2011, para 12 citing Proudman).

Unfortunately, because students lack the appropriate motivation to succeed in school, they have been dubbed underachievers (McCoach&Siegle, 2003).

Teachers have a role to play regarding their students' motivation. Students in a secondary agricultural education program attributed their lack of motivation to apathy due to "mediocre teaching" and "the absence of learning purpose" (DeLay & Swan, 2014, p. 106). Understanding what motivates students to perform is imperative to all secondary education teachers, administrators, and policymakers (Legault et al., 2006). In agricultural education, inquiry-based instruction (Thoron& Burleson, 2014), and active learning (Mueller, Knobloch, & Orvis, 2015) have yielded positive motivational outcomes. Chumbley, Haynes, and Stofer (2015) concluded that motivation to learn science was primarily prompted by the extrinsic motivation associated with grades. Though these studies have provided insight, a dearth of research related to motivational outcomes exists in agricultural education.

The primary goal of experiential learning is to enhance students' development and educational experiences by providing more opportunities for real-world learning. Experiential learning is most effective when it is a dynamic approach in which students engage, apply, collaborate, and reflect on course content and lessons learned (Kolb & Kolb, 2011).

Throughout the experiential learning process, the student is actively engaged in posing questions, investigating, experimenting, being curious, solving problems, assuming responsibility, being creative, and constructing meaning. Students are engaged intellectually, emotionally, socially, soulfully, and/or physically. Association for Experiential Education, 2011, para 4).

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Moreover, by participating in an EL class paired with relevant academic activities, learners improve their level of inherent motivation for learning (Helle et al., 2007) and they have the opportunity to choose multiple paths to solve problems throughout the learning process by having choices and being autonomous (Svinicki and McKeachie, 2014). EL is regarded as learning by action whereby information is built by the student during the renovation of changes (Afida et al., 2012). Within EL, people become remarkably more liable for their learning which regulates a stronger connection between the learning involvement, practices, and reality (Salas et al., 2009) that are key roles in learning motivation.

There is a strong reason why experiential learning is becoming more prevalent in classrooms across the world. This method of instruction immerses students in authentic settings where choices are made, actions are assessed, and skills are practiced in a secure setting.

The purpose of this study is to determine the influence of experiential learning on student's engagement and their academic achievement via the lenses of the viewpoints.

RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES
The positive impacts of experiential learning are well documented, including gains in deep learning, practical competence, persistence rates, civic engagement, appreciation of diversity, professional networks, and many others (Kuh and O'Donnell, 2013).

Experiential learning focuses on creating experiences that have a practical application of knowledge and skills to real-world experiences to increase learner's knowledge and develop competence in skills and behaviors thus, it is effectively used in schools, higher education, therapy, corporate training, and other areas for educational learning, personal development, and skills building (David, 2021).

There are countless studies on experiential learning experiences. According to Northern Illinois University, 2016 one helps to complete students' preparation for their chosen careers which reinforces course content and theory. Students learn through student- rather than instructor-centered experiences by doing, discovering, reflecting, and applying. Through these experiences, students develop communication skills and self-confidence and gain and strengthen decision-making skills by responding to and solving real-world problems and processes.

According to Abington Friends School, 2021, experiential education teaches students to examine their actions and their thought processes, and even their emotional responses. This internal reflection prepares students for the workplace and helps them make major life choices, improve their personal relationships, and address their emotional needs.
In other words, educators cannot concretely understand the fulfillment of their learners'

basic mental necessities and enthusiasm for learning (Reeve, 2012). Nonetheless, Reeve asserted that in contrast to motivation, learners' engagement by all accounts is a phenomenon that is distinctive and can nearly be noticed. Generally, educators can impartially consider whether or not a specific learner is engaged in the class exercises, such as problem-solving.

Indeed, engaging in daily activities, such as going to classes, completing schoolwork, and paying attention to the educator, is all indicators of classroom engagement (Woods et al., 2019).Learners become remarkably more liable for their learning which regulates a stronger connection between the learning involvement, practices, and reality that are key roles in learning motivation (Kong, 2021).

Additionally, to make sure that the learners gain the required knowledge and get the factual training, it is equally important to give them time to develop their ability to use their knowledge and apply those skills in real-world situations to resolve problems that are relevant to their careers (Huang and Jiang, 2020).

Experiential learning facilitates the development of leadership skills. It helps bridge the gap between the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and the generation of skills through active participation in learning. Especially when it is applied in a team-based learning setting Perez, 2021).
Experiential learning is a powerful way of learning. It gives a much deeper understanding, much longer retention, and much more fun and energy during learning Perez, 2021).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
1. What is experiential learning, students' engagement, and academic achievement among respondents?

2. Does experiential learning significantly influence students' engagement?

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3. Does experiential learning significantly influence students' academic achievement?

METHODOLOGY

This study aims to determine the influence of experiential learning on students' learning engagements and academic achievements. The 349 grade 10 student-respondents were randomly selected using sampling in Raosoft formula to six secondary public schools of Zamboanga City Division during the school year 2022-2023. The researchers opt to use Google Forms in data gathering which has 3 parts survey questionnaire and instructions on how to answer in detail. The tool was distributed to the respondents' Facebook and email. Consent to conduct the study was given to the Schools Division Office and Office of the School Head prior to the distribution of the questionnaire. The respondents are given a week to answer the survey questionnaire. The average grades of the respondents on the first quarter were used to determine their academic achievements. The study employs a descriptive-quantitative with correlational research design. Identification of traits, frequency patterns, trends, and classifications are the goal of descriptive research. When a topic or problem is still under investigation, this is helpful. Understanding the how, when, and where of anything before researching why it occurs is necessary. To collect information about behaviors and events, you can use observations rather than relying on the sincerity and accuracy of respondents. In order to understand how individuals behave in real-world settings, psychological, social, and market researchers frequently employ this strategy (McCombes, 2022).

Hence, the quantitative research focused on gathering numerical data through adapted questionnaires and generalizing it across the respondents. The collected numerical data were described and explained through the earlier form of research design.

Furthermore, this study used this type of research design to describe the influence of experiential learning on students' engagement and academic achievement. A causal relationship research design was also used in this study to determine the significant influence of experiential learning on students' engagement and academic achievement. Causal relationships between variables may consist of direct and indirect effects. Direct causal effects are effects that go directly from one variable to another. Indirect effects occur when the relationship between two variables is mediated by one or more variables (Lleras, 2015).

The table below shows the basis of the influence of experiential learning on students' learning engagement.

Table 1. Influence of Experiential Learning on Students' Learning Engagement

Weighted	Description
4.21 - 5.00	Excellent
3.41 – 4.20	Very Good
2.61 – 3.40	Good
1.81 – 2.60	Fair
1.00 – 1.80	Poor

The four (4) Likert Scale was used to get the weighted means of each item and computed by multiplying the number of frequencies by the assigned numerical values. T

Table 2 illustrates the over-all summary on the of experiential learning, student engagement and academic performance among respondents. It revealed that respondents obtained a mean of 3.06 for experiential learning which is interpreted as "good", a mean obtained of 3.20 for Student's Engagement, interpreted as "good" and a mean of 83.27 for Academic Achievement which is interpreted as "satisfactory". The study implies that

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

experiential learning, student engagement and academic performance of the students relatively on the same level where they put out their learnings on what they have experience. As corroborated by (Kolb & Kolb, 2011) states that experiential learning works best when it's a dynamic process where students participate, put what they've learned to use, cooperate, and reflect on it.

Table 2. Experiential Learning, Student Engagement and Academic Achievement among respondents

Variable	Mean	Interpretation
Experiential Learning	3.06	Good
Student's Engagement	3.20	Good
Academic Achievement	83.27	Satisfactory

Table 3 shows the regression between the student's engagement of the respondents and the experiential learning. The data reveals that 38.6% of the student's engagement affects the experiential learning of the respondents. H1 tests if Experiential Learning significantly influence student's engagement. The dependent variable was regressed on predicting variable Experiential Learning to test the hypothesis H1. Experiential Learning significantly predicted student engagement F (1,349) = 219. 532, p< 0.001, which indicates that experiential learning play a vital role in

student engagement (b= .621, p< .001). These results clearly direct the positive influence of experiential learning.

This implies that experiential learning involves students more in the process of learning and engages them in class activities, which aids in student retention. As corroborated by Franco, (2021) that states experiential learning is an extremely effective method of learning. It provides a much deeper understanding, a much longer retention period, and a lot more fun and energy while learning.

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Table 3. Influence of Experiential Learning to Student's Engagement

Hypothesis	Regression Weight	Beta Coefficient	R^2	F	p-value	Hypotheses Supported
H1	**EL → SE**	**.621**	**.386**	**219.532**	**.000**	**YES**

Table 4 shows the regression between the student's academic achievement of the respondents and the experiential learning. H2 tests if experiential learning significantly influences the student's academic achievement. The dependent variable was regressed on predicting variable Experiential Learning to test the hypothesis H2. Experiential Learning does not significantly influence the student's academic achievement F (1,349) = .256, p< 0.001, which indicates that the Experiential Learning is process based

while student's academic achievement is outcome based. (b= .027, p< .001). These results clearly identify that there is no direct influence of experiential learning in students' academic achievement. Moreover, 0.1% of the variance in students' academic achievement affects the experiential learning of the respondents.

This implies that experiential learning involves students putting more emphasis on the process of learning than the result. As corroborated by Geh, (2014) states that the

process of experiential learning is more important than the outcome. Students are deeply engaged in the learning process.

Table 4. Influence of Experiential Learning on Student's Academic Achievement

Hypothesis	Regression Weight	Beta Coefficient	R^2	F	p-value	Hypotheses Supported
H2	EL → AA	.027	.001	.256	.613	NO

CONCLUSIONS

Experiential learning made a great contribution to encouraging students to actively engage in learning. In this study, the influence of experiential learning on student engagement and academic performance of the respondents are relatively on the same level rated as good. According to the findings, experiential learning influences respondents' levels of learning engagement because students are more actively engaged in the learning process and participate in class activities, which promotes student retention. Based also on the result, experiential learning does not influence the student's academic achievement which implies that experiential learning is centered on the process while the student's academic achievement is outcome-oriented. Students who learn through experiential means place greater value on the process than the final product.

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