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AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ON EMPLOYABILITY OF STUDENT IN DELHI

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Abstract: *This study has investigated the impact of the experiential learning practices on employability of management students in Delhi NCR area. The study employed a non-equivalent control group quasi-experimental design. The sample for the study comprised of 425 MBA students from Management Institutions in Delhi NCR. The sample group was taught about the purpose of research and role of their responses in achieving the objectives of this study. Some important research questions and hypotheses were framed, which guided the study. Data were analyzed, with reliability test, first the zero-order CFA was conducted then CFA was run using AMOS and finally each construct was run on CFA and SEM was conducted to test the proposed model.*

The study revealed that experiential learning is better to the conventional expository approach in enhancing students' employability.

Keywords: *Experiential learning, achievement, Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Reliability Test, employability.*

INTRODUCTION

In India the structure of higher education was not as it is today. There has been a great paradigm shifts in the education sector. But still there is a lot of scope to update education and skills development system in India as per the competition at international level. Higher education in the country needs immediate upgrade to be able to create a new generation of graduates in different disciplines. The time has come to design, in the language of technology to illumine the future. Considering the changes that have occurred in the last two or three decades, it is not difficult to envisage the extent of the changes that will confront that generation, if not their precise characteristics. In these circumstances, today's planners can endeavour only to give them excellence in the frontiers of knowledge presently available in the expectation that they will be enabled to adapt themselves to unknown challenges, just as the present generation managed to deal with the technological revolution of the end if the last century.

Though, the Indian Universities and colleges are successfully training the students to enhance their skills to meet the expectation of the employers. But there is huge scope for them to upgrade young generation and prepare them for international standards of employments. In this regard, the most learning universities and colleges are emphasizing on the experiential learning to enhance the skills of Students. Experiential learning in general is known as a process of learning through experience and in other words learning through doing. It is also known as "Hands-on-learning. The faculty fraternity encourages students to go for summer training, internship, research projects under their mentorship. This is done with the objective to develop orientation towards creation of new practical knowledge. This makes our universities different from the world class universities.

It is indeed need of the day that Universities should encourage communication and other magerial skills along with acquiring the domain knowledge, which will enable the management students to use their knowledge and skills for enhancing their efficiency and productivity. In the present circumstances, Internationalization of education has become latest phenomenon and is a key reality. Internationalization of education is a milestone to make youngsters more competitive and employable. This research study is an attempt to understand the link between experiential learning and other employability skills and also the impact of experiential learning on employability of students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Experiential learning, the process of making meaning from direct experience (Itin, 1999), has been recognized for its educational value in higher education (Smith, 2005). It is often called "learning by doing" because students are involved in a range of skills and activities that require active observation and reflection. Experiential learning can involve laboratory work, field trips, problem-solving, and an assortment of other highly engaging activities included in academic coursework (Roberts, 2006).

The students set goals at the beginning of the experience; journal and reflect throughout the semester; and, at the end of the experience, (a) submit a final portfolio and final reflection of the experience, and (b) make a professional poster presentation. AgPAQ, previously known as Agron 356/Engl 309, is an upper division learning community where students concurrently enroll in a cluster of four courses (*i.e.*, agronomic, agribusiness, and communication courses). Small teams of students work with real clients and precision agriculture tools to address the client's needs by preparing a complete crop and soil management plan.

Higher education has not always been as structured as it is today. At the beginning, higher education in America would be governed less by accident than by certain purpose, less by impulse than by design (Rudolph, 1990, p. 3). The American higher

education system began with Harvard, which was established in 1636 in Cambridge, MA (Harvard 2 University, 2011). At the beginning of higher education, institutions like Harvard were focused mainly on liberal arts education. There were aspects of life that people longed for in a certain order: shelter, a house of worship, the framework of government, and the advancement of learning (Rudolph, 1990). Higher education was once primarily for the elite, enlightened people who intended to obtain a well-rounded education in liberal studies. There were some middle and lower-class families who were able to send their sons to colleges, but the overwhelming majority of their sons stayed home and farmed (Rudolph, 1990). Throughout the early years of American higher education, many institutions, people, and events were instrumental in molding today's American educational system. One of the institutions that helped to modify the attitude of American people toward going to further their education at college was the land-grant college. The land-grant college was created out of the Morrill Federal Grant Act of 1862 (Rudolph, 1990).

The Act, passed by Congress, had a tremendous impact on the higher education system in the United States. It began to open doors of opportunities for many average American citizens, especially farmers, to participate in a larger variety of education (Christy and Williamson, 1992), including the practical arts. The Morrill Federal Grant Act of 1862 provided a great prospect for many common Americans, but the act did not divide funds among racial lines. This led to the development of the Morrill Act of 1890, which established colleges of agriculture, mechanical arts, and home economics for people of color (Christy and Williamson, 1992). These second Morrill Act ¯provided regular annual appropriations for land-grant colleges, the act stipulated that no appropriations would go to states that denied admission to the colleges on the basis of race unless they also set up separate but equal facilities (Rudolph, 1990, p.254). The Morrill 3 Acts opened doors for higher education to be able to serve the ordinary person interested in the mechanical and agricultural arts through land-grant colleges (Barrick, 1989).

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The purpose of this research was to study the impact of experiential learning on employability of student.

Hypothesis

H01: That experiential learning of students has positive Impact on employability of student.

HO2: That experiential learning of student has negative impact on employability of Students.

Data Collection

In this study, both sources of data have been used *i.e.* Primary source of data collection, *i.e.* the data which has been collected first time and secondary source of data *i.e.* the date which has already been used and published in Journals, Newspapers, Magazines, Websites, Reports etc.

The primary data has been collected with the help of well planned questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed among 500 MBA students from Management colleges *i.e.* BVIMR, New Delhi to achieve the objective of this Research.

Data Analysis

The collected data through distributing 500 questionnaires was interpreted and analyzed using reliability test, consisting factor analysis, confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modeling. The data was generated using SPSS 21.0 program. However, only 425 are usable as 75 of them are outliers and removed from the data.

There are comprehensively two sorts of tests utilized as a part of facts for information examination–parametric tests and Multivariate analysis. Information gathered was procedure with SPSS. There are comprehensively two sorts of tests utilized as a part of facts for information examination–parametric tests and Multivariate analysis. Information gathered was procedure with SPSS.

Since the number of respondent was 200, parametric tests are based on the assumption that the samples were drawn from normally distributed population, or more accurately that the sample means were normally distributed. According to the theorem of central tendencies if the value of N is more than 200 the data can be assumed to be normally distributed ($N = 425$). Because the testing procedure requires assumption about the type of population or parameters *i.e.* the population values, these tests are known as parametric tests. The researcher used Multivariate analysis for data analysis. Factor analysis was used to draw the results.

The first step of the data analysis following coding was to examine the responses and remove any questionnaires that were not complete enough to include in the analysis. Respondents who failed to complete at least 90% of the survey items were removed from the sample prior to statistical analysis. Finally, to fulfill the objective, reliability test was conducted, first the zero-order CFA was conducted then CFA was run using AMOS and finally each construct was run on CFA and finally SEM was conducted to test the proposed model. The details are as follows:

Reliability Analysis

Reliability as used in research refers fundamentally to consistency of measures which allows for replication of the same results when similar studies are carried out (Bryman and Bell, 2007). A Cronbach's alpha was used to measure reliability of concepts, The

main reason being to reduce the measurement error while the rule is drawn that the higher the value of Cronbach's alpha the higher the degree of inter correlation among items in the scale.(Hair, Money, Samoueland Page 2007,244)

Case Processing Summary

		N	%
Cases	Valid	425	100.0
	Excluded[a]	0	.0
	Total	425	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.943	37

This measurement ranged between 1 (denoting a perfect internal reliability) and 0 (denoting no internal reliability). However, a measure above 0.7 suggests a good reliability and above that the better (Zikmundetal 2010:306) this study seeks to achieve the good reliability.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) is a statistical technique used to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables. CFA allows the researcher to test the hypothesis that a relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs exists. The researcher uses knowledge of the theory, empirical research, or both, postulates the relationship pattern a priori and then tests the hypothesis statistically.CFA allows the researcher to test the hypothesis that a relationship between the observed variables and their underlying latent construct(s) exists. The researcher uses knowledge of the theory, empirical research, or both, postulates the relationship pattern a priori and then tests the hypothesis statistically.

Traditional statistical methods normally utilize one statistical test to determine the significance of the analysis. However, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), CFA specifically, relies on several statistical tests to determine the adequacy of model fit to the data. The chi-square test indicates the amount of difference between expected and observed covariance matrices. A chi-square value close to zero indicates little difference between the expected and observed covariance matrices. In addition, the probability level must be greater than 0.05 when chi-square is close tozero.

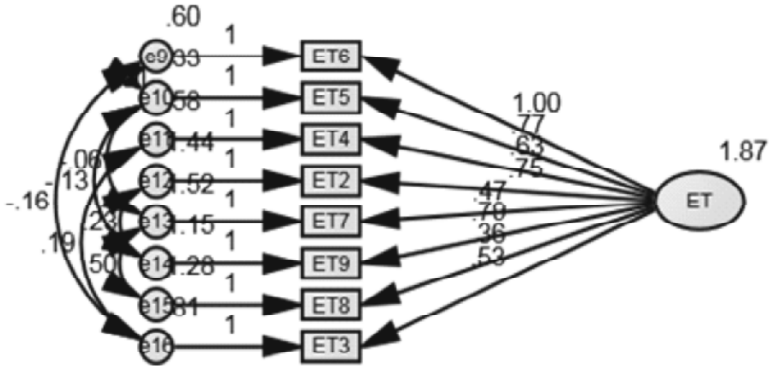
The Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is equal to the discrepancy function adjusted for sample size. CFI ranges from 0 to 1 with a larger value indicating better model fit. Acceptable model fit is indicated by a CFI value of 0.90 or greater (Hu andBentler, 1999).

Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is related to residual in the model. RMSEA values range from 0to 1 with a smaller RMSEA value indicating better model fit. Acceptable model fit is indicated by an RMSEA value of0.06 or less (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

If model fit is acceptable, the parameter estimates are examined. The ratio of each parameter estimate to its standard error is distributed as a z statistic and is significant at the 0.05 level if its value exceeds 1.96 and at the 0.01 level it its value exceeds 2.56 (Hoyle, 1995). Un-standardized parameter estimates retain scaling information of variables and can only be interpreted with reference to the scales of the variables. Standardized parameter estimates are transformations of un-standardized estimates that remove scaling and can be used for informal comparisons of parameters throughout the model. Standardized estimates correspond to effect-size estimates.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Codes	*Factor Name*
TP	Training Practices
ET	Experiential Training
EE	External Employability
CM	Career Management
CS	College support
SC	Support from the colleagues
IE	Internal Employability



In the above figure, *Experiential Training* is the latent construct having 8 measured variables. The degree to which each of these measured variables is related to latent construct is represented by the variable's loadings or standardized estimates. Since a measured variable doesn't explain the latent variable perfectly, an error term is added. The eight unidirectional arrows leading from ET to each of the eight observed variables suggest that these score values are influenced by the respective underlying factor. As such, these path coefficients represent the magnitude of expected change in the observed variables for every change in the related latent variable (or factor). Here the connotation for the following terms is as:

ET2	I regard my academic work as top priority
ET3	My university has an outstanding reputation in my field of study
ET4	A lot more people apply for my degree than are places available
ET5	My chosen subject(s) rank(s) highly in terms of social status
ET6	All information about career opportunities in the college is readily available.
ET7	I achieve high grades in relation to my studies
ET8	My faculty makes sure that I can learn by giving me challenging assignments.
ET9	My college provides new and creative training opportunities.

Standardized Regression Weights: (Group number 1 - Default model)

			Estimate
ET6	←	ET	.869
ET5	←	ET	.876
ET4	←	ET	.752
ET2	←	ET	.651
ET7	←	ET	.463
ET9	←	ET	.707
ET8	←	ET	.399
ET3	←	ET	.625

The construct "Experiential Training" with overall value of 1.87 is included in the validated model of impact on Employability. The items including ET 2 (0.651), ET 3 (.625), ET 4 (.752), ET 5 (.847), ET 6 (.869), ET 7 (.463) ET 8 (.399) and ET 9 (.707) have all been included in the validated model of impact on Employability as suggested in conceptual model. Error associated with observed variables represents measurement error, which reflects on their adequacy in measuring the related underlying factor (Experiential Training). Measurement error derives from two sources: random measurement error (in the psychometric sense) and error uniqueness, a term used to describe error variance arising from some characteristic that is considered to be specific (or unique) to a particular indicator variable. Such error often represents non-random (or systematic) measurement error.

Summary Table-ET

The Normed Fit Index (NFI)	0.980	The Normed Fit Index (NFI) Exceeds .90 (Byrne, 1994) or .95 (Schumackerand Lomax, 2004)
Incremental fit index, IFI	0.984	IFI should be equal to or greater than .90 to accept the model
the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI)	0.965	the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) should be nearer to 1
The Comparative Fit Index	0.984	The Comparative Fit Index exceeds .93 (Byrne, 1994)
The Goodness of Fit Index	0.981	The Goodness of Fit Index exceeds .90 (Byrne, 1994)
RMSEA	0.068	the RMSEA (good models < .08)

Hypothesis Testing

H01: That experiential learning of students has positive Impact on employability of student.

As revealed in the data analysis that measurement ranged between 1 (denoting a perfect internal reliability) and 0 (denoting no internal reliability). However, a measure above 0.7 suggests a good reliability and above that the better (Zikmundetal 2010:306) this study seeks to achieve the good reliability. In view of the above, Hypothesis 1 (HO1) was tested and found ACCEPTED as the responses received indicates experiential learning has a good reliability towards having positive impact on employability of students.

HO2: That experiential learning of student has negative impact on employability of Students. Hypothesis 2 (H02) was tested and found REJECTED as the responses received indicates that experiential learning has a good reliability towards having positive impact on employability of students.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study, coupled with the literature of higher education, student learning, and experiential learning, indicated that the respondents believe that their experience had a positive impact on the development of their skills and abilities. The results showed a positive influence on their career/graduate school aspirations. The results also indicated that the programs were able to positively enhance career/ graduate school preparation by helping the participants' transition from undergraduate student to employee/graduate student.

Ultimately, colleges and universities can benefit from the findings of this study because of the demonstrated impact that experiential learning programs have on their participants. The findings of this study revealed that the respondents preferred the methods and techniques to acquire real-world knowledge and hands-on experiences through on the job methods like Summer Interns, Live projects, Research Projects, Internship etc. The study revealed that experiential learning is better to the conventional expository approach in enhancing students' employability. Thus, Government Department and Agencies, educators, colleges, and universities should consider implementing more and more methods and system of enhancing experiential learning to develop their employability skills.

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