

# Learning by Doing: Perspective of Primary Grade Teachers on Experiential Learning

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## Abstract

This study examined the viewpoints of educators on the implementation of the "Learning by Doing" strategy to improve academic skills in primary grade learners. The findings revealed both the teaching methodologies adopted by the educators and the challenges they faced in applying this approach in their classrooms. The research involved eight primary grade teachers from a public school in the Matina District of Davao City. Thematic content analysis was conducted to gain insights into the experiences of these teachers with the "Learning by Doing" strategy. Key themes that emerged included hands-on learning and the encouragement of creativity. However, teachers also reported notable challenges, such as students' difficulties with concentration and a lack of adequate instructional materials. Additional findings indicated that educators could benefit from attending seminars on innovative teaching strategies and emphasized the need for better access to instructional resources in schools. Ultimately, this research seeks to provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the "Learning by Doing" strategy in enhancing academic skills among primary grade learners, contributing to the overall improvement of educational quality in academic institutions.

**Keywords:** *Perspective, Primary Grade Teachers, Experiential Learning.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Experiential learning offers an interactive educational framework, allowing students to participate in practical activities that deepen their comprehension and skill set. This research examines primary grade teachers' views on the application and effects of hands-on learning or learning by doing in promoting more profound educational experiences for young students.

Mahajan (2021) emphasizes that experiential learning, as expounded by John Dewey, emphasizes active, hands-on engagement with the environment, making learning more appealing, significant, and effective compared to passive methods like reading or attending sessions. Meanwhile, EuroKids (2023) posits that learning by doing is more than just watching videos or reading books to be a good cook. The expertise comes from practicing in the kitchen, trying different ingredients, and gaining hands-on experience. Learning by doing is essential and helpful for learning practical things. Hence, learning by doing is crucial for mastering practical skills, as it involves hands-on application, leading to a deeper understanding and in-depth knowledge through direct experience.

Moreover, Smowltech (2022) conveys that learning by doing is an active learning methodology based on experience to assimilate concepts through actions. It also encourages the student to learn from mistakes and draw conclusions after analyzing the practice in a clear spirit of continuous improvement. While the idea dates back to Aristotle in the 4th century BC, John Dewey popularized it in the late 19th century, emphasizing active education to help learners retain knowledge better. The objective of learning by doing essentially seeks to prevent the student from forgetting the knowledge learned over time through experience instead of passively assimilating concepts through memory, making them much briefer.

Similarly, Sanskruti (2020) attests that learning by doing, also known as kinesthetic or hands-on learning, involves engaging in activities to understand concepts through experience, making learning more engaging and memorable compared to traditional textbook-based methods. Learning by doing means learning from experiences resulting directly from one's actions. In other words, it is a method by which students make the most of their education through active participation.

In the process, the learner took ownership of own learning (Mekonnen, 2020).

Further, Kong (2021) affirms that the beneficial impact of experiential learning (EL) holds significant relevance for educators contemplating the integration of this approach into their classrooms. By equipping their students with the necessary knowledge to complete tasks, teachers can ensure their learners' success, as experiential theory posits that understanding is developed by transforming practice into comprehension. According to the literature review, the traditional function of the teacher evolves from being a mere source of information to becoming a facilitator of experiences through established systematic processes.

Unfortunately, along with the advantages of doing as experiential learning strategies are the challenges of implementing it in the classrooms. Macmillan Education Limited (2023) highlights potential challenges of the learning-by-doing strategy, such as teacher and student exhaustion due to constant interaction, difficulty in measuring progress without comparisons, limited individual study time, and reduced opportunities for reflection. It also notes that inadequate structured practice can hinder language acquisition, and monotonous lessons may result if teachers lack confidence to vary activities or pace.

Moreover, Skulmowski (2024) stresses the importance of activities in education but warns against the indiscriminate use of "learning by doing" without considering its limitations. It highlights that not all learning tasks benefit from adding practical elements, especially when those activities are cognitively demanding. In such cases, the focus on "doing" can overshadow "learning" by exhausting cognitive resources, leaving little for content retention. The author suggests distinguishing between simpler, motor-focused activities and more complex, generative learning activities to ensure that both doing and learning are effectively balanced.

Further, Ran and Kumar (2023) stipulates that implementing the experiential learning approach in schools poses several challenges. Key obstacles include a lack of essential resources such as sufficient time and materials, along with a shortage of qualified teachers. Additionally, traditional assessment methods and limited teacher engagement further hinder the effective integration of high-quality experiential learning opportunities. Addressing these issues requires genuine efforts and focused attention from the government.

Overall, experiential learning emphasizes hands-on engagement, enabling students to deepen their understanding and develop practical skills through active participation. This approach fosters retention and critical thinking by encouraging students to learn from experience, analyze mistakes, and draw conclusions for continuous improvement. While highly effective, challenges such as limited resources, teacher exhaustion, traditional assessment practices, and the need for structured activities highlight the difficulties in its classroom implementation. To maximize its benefits, educators must balance simpler and more complex learning activities, adapt

their roles as facilitators, and receive support from institutional and governmental levels.

## II. METHOD

This study explored the perspectives of primary grade teachers on the use and impact of experiential learning, specifically focusing on the hands-on approach known as learning by doing. The qualitative phenomenological research design was chosen to gain deeper insights into the lived experiences of teachers as they implement experiential learning strategies in their classrooms. Phenomenology, as a research design, emphasizes understanding shared experiences and the significance teachers attach to such pedagogical approaches. By exploring the application of learning by doing, this study highlights how primary grade teachers perceive its role in fostering student engagement and comprehension. Tomaszewski et al. (2020), referencing Flood (2010), assert that the phenomenological approach in qualitative research is particularly effective in analyzing the essence of lived experiences, enabling a nuanced understanding of how experiential learning practices resonate with teachers and their students.

In this phenomenological study, the participants, consisting of primary grade teachers, engaged in discussions about their observations and experiences related to the application of experiential learning in their classrooms. The researcher employed in-depth interviews as the primary method for collecting data, enabling a thorough exploration of teachers' lived experiences with the learning-by-doing approach. The participants shared both subjective insights, reflecting their personal perceptions and challenges, and objective observations, drawn from their practical implementation of experiential learning techniques. These narratives provided a rich foundation for understanding the nuanced impact of experiential learning on teaching practices and student outcomes.

As articulated by Fontana and Frey (2000), in-depth interviews can range from structured to more flexible, open-ended formats, making them particularly suited for ethnographic studies. In the context of this research, in-depth interviews were employed to delve into the perspectives of primary grade teachers regarding the implementation of experiential learning. These interviews allowed for the exploration of complex teaching behaviors and strategies without constraining the inquiry to predefined categories. A meaningful, human-to-human connection between the researcher and participants was a critical aspect, facilitating open and genuine discussions about the challenges, benefits, and experiences of using learning-by-doing approaches in primary classrooms.

Eight (8) participants were purposively selected for this study, all of whom were primary grade teachers from public schools in the Matina District, Davao City Division. This sampling method aligns with the study's focus on exploring the perspectives of teachers with relevant experience in implementing experiential learning strategies in the primary

grades. Purposive sampling, as supported by Chun et al. (2019, cited in Mwita, 2022), is ideal for ensuring that data is collected from individuals who are most knowledgeable about the research topic. To meet the inclusion criteria, participants were required to have a minimum of three (3) years of teaching experience, allowing for in-depth insights into the implementation of the "learning by doing" approach.

In addition, this phenomenological study, focused on the perspectives of primary grade teachers on experiential learning, adhered strictly to ethical standards throughout its conduct. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, ensuring they understood the purpose of the study and their right to seek clarification at any time. Prior permission was granted for recording conversations, with assurances that all information would be treated confidentially and used exclusively for academic purposes. The research upheld key ethical principles, including respect for individuals, beneficence, justice, consent, and confidentiality, to ensure the integrity of the study and the trust of its participants.

As the researcher, my responsibility was to produce robust research outcomes, involving the formulation of research inquiries, conducting interviews, and analyzing and transcribing the data. The data analysis will involve categorizing and coding the ideas presented in the transcriptions. This method, as outlined by Graneheim and Lundman (2004) and cited in Vinitha (2019), involves weaving together the underlying meanings that span the various categories. This approach not only enhances our understanding of the participants' experiences but also allows for a nuanced interpretation of the latent content within their narratives, ultimately leading to richer and more impactful insights.

Further, the data analysis involved building significant and meaningful themes revealing key insights from the data. This analytical process is called Thematic Content Analysis (TCA) which according to King (2004) as cited in Dawadi (2020) is a search for themes that can capture the narratives available in the account of data sets. It involves the identification of themes through careful reading and re-reading of the transcribed data.

To ensure data accuracy in this phenomenological study on experiential learning, participants were actively involved in reviewing the transcriptions of their interview sessions. This process, as emphasized by Patton (2002), allowed participants to confirm findings and verify the accuracy of interview summaries. By incorporating participant feedback, the researchers ensured the completeness, fairness, and validity of the data analysis. This collaborative approach also helped refine the research process, ensuring that the study's questions aligned with the participants' experiences and perspectives.

Additionally, this study will specifically utilize environmental triangulation. The insights gathered from various environments will be compared and integrated to enhance the validity of my findings. According to Vivek (2023), environmental triangulation is a research strategy that

requires data collection from multiple contexts to strengthen the credibility and reliability of qualitative results.

In summary, this study examined the perspectives of primary grade teachers on the use and impact of experiential learning, focusing on the hands-on approach known as "learning by doing," using a qualitative phenomenological design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with eight public school teachers from Matina District, Davao City, employing purposive sampling and adhering to ethical research standards. Through thematic content analysis and environmental triangulation, the study revealed meaningful insights into the challenges, benefits, and strategies associated with implementing experiential learning in primary classrooms.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following section presents the study's findings organized into themes that emerged from a thematic content analysis of the collected data. The discussed themes and findings focus on the strategies and challenges faced by primary grade teachers in implementing experiential learning, specifically emphasizing the "learning by doing" approach.

#### ➤ *Hands-on Learning.*

One of the themes developed from the primary grade teachers' narrations was hands-on learning. This pedagogical approach served as a viable alternative to conventional lectures, facilitating student engagement through activities that are directly relevant to the subject matter being addressed in the classroom. By employing practical applications of the curriculum to solve problems or create projects, students acquire knowledge through active participation. Teachers observed that this learning-by-doing strategy enhances student interaction and increases enjoyment in the learning process. Such an approach had demonstrated efficacy in improving educational outcomes. This assertion is further corroborated by the research conducted by Main (2023), who argues that hands-on learning, often characterized as experiential learning or learning by doing, immerses students in practical experiences, thereby fostering a more profound connection with the content being taught.

#### ➤ *Develops Creativity.*

A recurring theme identified in teachers' views on Learning by Doing as a strategy to improve academic skills in primary grade students is the development of creativity. The insights from the teacher participants indicate that this approach effectively highlights students' creative abilities. According to Chan (2022), fostering students' creativity is essential, as it can be utilized in various contexts and offers numerous advantages. Creativity stands out as a vital component of the learning process, as it encourages students to transcend traditional concepts and venture into new realms of thought.

Meanwhile, teachers in primary grades have faced significant obstacles in utilizing Learning by Doing as a method to bolster academic skills among their students. The

challenges that surfaced can be summarized in the following themes:

➤ *Lack of Concentration.*

The lack of concentration among learners emerged as a significant challenge in implementing the "learning by doing" strategy. Teacher-participants observed that students often became distracted, spending time entertaining their classmates instead of engaging in their assigned tasks. This lack of focus disrupts the learning process and undermines the effectiveness of experiential learning activities. Bordia (2022) supports this observation, highlighting that maintaining concentration in children can be particularly challenging, requiring teachers to implement strategies to keep students focused during hands-on activities.

➤ *Lack of Instructional Materials.*

The lack of instructional materials was identified as a critical challenge in implementing the "learning by doing" strategy. Despite their dedication to engaging learners through hands-on activities, teacher-participants noted that inadequate resources limited their ability to fully execute experiential learning approaches. Maffea (2020) underscores this issue, noting that insufficient classroom resources remain a global challenge, forcing teachers to adapt their teaching strategies without the necessary tools. This "wicked problem" requires multifaceted and long-term solutions to support teachers in creating effective and resource-rich learning environments.

Consequently, the study had developed insights that may help enrich the effort of the teachers in using Learning by Doing as strategy to enhance academic skills among primary grade learners. The insights such as Attend seminar about new teaching strategies and Provision of instructional materials in school served as propositions rooted on the viewpoints and challenges of teacher-participants in using Learning by Doing as strategy in the classroom.

In summary, the study explored the strategies and challenges of primary grade teachers in implementing the "learning by doing" approach, highlighting its effectiveness and drawbacks. Hands-on learning fosters interactivity and creativity, with students engaging deeply through practical experiences that enhance their connection to the subject matter. However, challenges such as students' lack of concentration and insufficient instructional materials hinder its effectiveness, as these issues disrupt the learning process and limit teachers' ability to implement the strategy fully. To address these concerns, the study suggests providing teachers with seminars on innovative teaching strategies and ensuring adequate instructional materials in schools.

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