

Perception of Ability to Organize Experiential Learning Activities among Vietnamese Undergraduate Students and Lecturers

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ABSTRACT Experiential learning involves students developing knowledge, skills, and values based on direct experience beyond conventional academic environments. The purpose of this study is to investigate Vietnamese undergraduate students, lecturers, and Youth Union and Student Association staffs' perception of the ability to organize experiential learning activities. A group of 470 Vietnamese (420 students, 50 lecturers, and Youth Union and Students Association staffs) from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam, participated in the survey. They completed a 32-item questionnaire about their study of the ability to organize experiential learning activities. The results showed that Vietnamese undergraduate students, lecturers, and Youth Union and Student Association staffs' perception of the ability to organize experiential learning activities relatively high. Well-organized learning would allow students to use their skills, promote learning positively, and increase student engagement in education.

INTRODUCTION

Vietnam has entered a new stage of development, which sets new requirements for human resources and human development. However, many difficulties are limiting the quality of human resources of the country, especially the quality of education, which is still low compared to the requirements of socio-economic development. Therefore, the top concern of the Ministry of education and the training of Vietnam is the issue of educational innovation. One of the modern education solutions to develop the students' ability is to organize experiential learning activities. (Cao et al. 2017).

Experiential learning, regarded as a phenomenon and foundation of education in the 21st century, was an essential factor in progressive education (Itin 1999). Experiential learning is a theory that empathizes the essential role of experience in the learning process (Kolb et al. 2001). It is also a theory of learning and human development, describes how everyone learns from experiences (De Stavenga Jong et al. 2006; Kolb 1984; Le and Tran-Chi 2019; Lewis and Williams 1994). Besides, ex-

periential activities is an educational activity, in which students rely on synthesizing knowledge and skills from many different fields of education to experience the realities of school life, family, society, and participation in vocational guidance and community service activities under the direction and organization of educators, thereby forming the essential virtue and general abilities, such as adapting to a new environment, designing and organizing activities. By encouraging students to participate in research (Tran-Chi et al. 2019), practicum (Huang et al. 2019), internship (Le and Tran-Chi 2019), experiential activities, they will have the opportunity to consider the problem from different angles, avoiding being imposed and come up with innovative solutions (Tran 2017). Therefore, the ability to organize experiential activities that are necessary to teaching work must be formed and developed for students who are from the department of education in university and will become educators.

From the researchers' point of view, organizers need the following abilities to organize experience activities:

- ◆ They are determining the main content and appropriate method to achieve the set goals.
- ◆ They are preparing a plan with objectives, form and contents, goals of experiential activities.

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- ♦ They are evaluating the effectiveness of the plan.
- ♦ They are assigning each of the members participating in experiential activities appropriate tasks based on their characteristics.
- ♦ They are coordinating resources and funding.

The ability to organize experiential learning activities is not a new topic. However, few studies have focused on this subject in Vietnam, especially for Vietnamese students in the Ho Chi Minh University of Education.

Aim and Objective

This research is conducted to find out the appropriate method to enhance the ability to organize experiential learning activities in the Ho Chi Minh University of Education. The research starts with reviewing the empirical literature of experiential learning activities in the learning process. A research methodology is introduced in the second section, followed by results and discussion. The last part is the conclusion.

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Participants were selected randomly from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam. All participants provided informed consent after receiving an explanation of the purpose of the research. The survey instrument distributed to 500 Vietnamese participants, of which 470 questionnaires returned, for a 94 percent return rate, which exceeds the 30 percent response rate most researchers require for analysis (Dillman 2000). The sample of this study was drawn from 470 students who completed the survey instrument. There were more students (89.4%) than lecturers and Youth Union and Students Association staffs (10.6%) among the 470 Vietnamese undergraduate students who surveyed.

Measure

Questionnaires designed to survey undergraduate students and lecturers and Youth Union and Students Association staff from the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Ho Chi Minh

City, Vietnam. This research started in October 2017 and finished in June 2019. First, social-demographic items were introduced in the questionnaire. Then, Vietnamese undergraduate students', lecturers', and Youth Union and Student Association staffs' perception of ability to organize experiential learning activities measured by a total of 32 questions. The responses of the participants are provided in five different levels based on a 5-point Likert scale (Croasmun and Ostrom 2011).

Analyses

All participants were provided informed consent before participation, and receiving an explanation of the purpose of the research. The ethics committee approved the research of Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 was used for data analyses. The coding procedure was performed as follow: 1 = Very high, 2 = Above Average, 3 = Average, 4 = Below Average, 5 = Very low.

According to Narli (2010), the interval width of the 5-Likert scale should be computed in order to set up the group boundary value for result discussions. $\text{Interval Width} = (\text{Upper value} - \text{Lower value})/n = (5-1)/5 = 0.8$. Group boundary values are built that help to discuss research results based on the above interval width, which are pointed in Table 1.

Table 1: Group boundary values of 5 Likert scale

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| 1.00 – 1.80 | Very low |
| 1.81 – 2.60 | Below average |
| 2.61 – 3.40 | Average |
| 3.41 – 4.20 | Above average |
| 4.21 – 5.00 | Very high |

RESULTS

The participants scored in the average range on the questionnaire. The mean score for the sample on the ability to organize experiential learning activities of students that Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff assess was 3.10 (SD = 1.040). Besides, the mean score for the ability to organize experiential learning activities that students self-evaluate was 3.21 (SD = 0.847). The mean, standard deviation of these variables are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: The ability to organize experiential learning activities

| S. No. | <i>The ability to organize experiential learning activities</i> | <i>Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff</i> | | | <i>Student</i> | | |
|---|--|--|-----------|--------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| | | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Order</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Order</i> |
| <i>A. The ability to prepare for organizing experiential learning activities</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Determine the time and place which is appropriate to each experiential learning activity. | 3.86 | 0.857 | 3 | 2.78 | 0.676 | 8 |
| 2 | Find out about the characteristics of collective students and individuals. | 3.28 | 1.429 | 4 | 2.80 | 0.800 | 7 |
| 3 | Assign students specific tasks to perform experiential learning activities. | 4.06 | 0.89 | 1 | 3.33 | 0.818 | 6 |
| 4 | Prepare documents for experiential learning activities. | 3.14 | 1.278 | 6 | 3.38 | 0.862 | 4 |
| 5 | Estimate the financial requirement to organize experiential learning activities. | 3.92 | 0.829 | 2 | 3.77 | 0.759 | 1 |
| 6 | Mobilize and coordinate human resources to organize experiential learning activities. | 2.54 | 1.129 | 8 | 3.38 | 0.856 | 4 |
| 7 | Prepare material facilities and technical facilities for experiential learning activities. | 3.02 | 1.169 | 7 | 3.64 | 0.85 | 2 |
| 8 | Another ability. | 3.26 | 1.192 | 5 | 3.43 | 1.019 | 3 |
| <i>B. The ability to design experiential learning activities</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Name the experiential learning activities. | 3.90 | 0.931 | 1 | 4.15 | 0.695 | 1 |
| 2 | Determine the objectives and tasks of experiential learning activities. | 3.34 | 1.171 | 3 | 3.72 | 0.758 | 2 |
| 3 | Create specific content for experiential learning activities. | 3.20 | 1.088 | 4 | 3.05 | 0.913 | 4 |
| 4 | Determine appropriate organizational form of experiential learning activities. | 3.12 | 1.062 | 5 | 2.89 | 1.053 | 5 |
| 5 | Design the tool to assess the result of experiential learning activities. | 2.50 | 0.931 | 7 | 2.86 | 0.908 | 6 |
| 6 | Organize human resources to implement the plan, show the implementation progress. | 2.52 | 1.129 | 6 | 3.34 | 0.888 | |
| 7 | Another ability. | 3.40 | 1.05 | 2 | 2.80 | 0.8 | 7 |
| <i>C. The ability to promote the implementation of experiential learning activities</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Disseminate the plan of experiential learning activities. | 3.62 | 1.028 | 1 | 3.50 | 0.689 | 1 |
| 2 | Apply methods and techniques which are appropriate to the objectives and contents of experiential learning activities. | 3.38 | 1.028 | 2 | 3.39 | 0.734 | 3 |
| 3 | Manage the time of experiential learning activities. | 3.20 | 1.143 | 3 | 3.45 | 0.817 | 2 |
| 4 | Supervise, control, and adjust the plan of experiential learning activities. | 2.68 | 0.999 | 6 | 3.38 | 0.786 | 4 |
| 5 | Competence to handle the situation while implementing the plan of experiential learning activities. | 2.80 | 0.926 | 5 | 3.06 | 0.797 | 6 |
| 6 | Comment, assess, and learn from experience the result of experiential learning activities. | 3.04 | 0.989 | 4 | 3.14 | 0.83 | 5 |
| <i>D. The ability to coordinate human resources while organizing experiential learning activities</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Determine the human resources to organize experiential learning activities. | 2.78 | 1.016 | 3 | 3.10 | 0.853 | 3 |
| 2 | Apply appropriate forms and methods to mobilize with each participant and the specific situation. | 2.94 | 1.077 | 2 | 3.04 | 0.936 | 5 |
| 3 | Set up and adjust relationships while disseminating. | 2.64 | 0.898 | 4 | 3.12 | 0.893 | 2 |
| 4 | Communicate appropriately with mobilized people. | 2.48 | 0.995 | 5 | 3.07 | 0.847 | 4 |
| 5 | Another ability. | 2.96 | 1.068 | 1 | 3.34 | 0.849 | 1 |

Table 2: Contd...

| S. No. | <i>The ability to organize experiential learning activities</i> | <i>Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff</i> | | | <i>Student</i> | | |
|--|--|--|-----------|--------------|----------------|-----------|--------------|
| | | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Order</i> | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | <i>Order</i> |
| <i>E. The ability to assess the result and adjust experiential learning activities</i> | | | | | | | |
| 1 | Determine objectives to assess the result of experiential learning activities. | 2.80 | 1.262 | 4 | 3.04 | 0.923 | 1 |
| 2 | Determine contents to assess the result of experiential learning activities. | 3.30 | 1.093 | 1 | 3.01 | 0.962 | 3 |
| 3 | Establish the criteria to assess the result of experiential learning activities. | 2.72 | 0.904 | 5 | 2.94 | 0.813 | 6 |
| 4 | Determine the process, methods to assess the result of experiential learning activities. | 2.70 | 0.814 | 6 | 3.02 | 0.859 | 2 |
| 5 | Adjust new experiential learning activities. | 3.12 | 1.081 | 2 | 2.98 | 0.825 | 4 |
| 6 | Another ability. | 3.08 | 0.829 | 3 | 2.96 | 1.061 | 5 |
| | M | | 3.10 | | | 3.21 | |
| | SD | | 1.040 | | | 0.847 | |

M: Mean; *SD*: Standard deviation

The Ability to Prepare for Organizing Experiential Learning Activities

The survey result of the ability to determine the time and place which is appropriate to each experiential learning activity showed that there was a significant difference in score, with the Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.86$) assessing with a higher score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 2.78$). The score of the ability to find out about characteristics of collective students and individuals had a significant difference between Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.28$), and students ($M = 2.80$). Similarly, the lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 4.06$) assessed the ability to assign students specific tasks to perform experiential learning activities with a higher score than self- assessment scores of students ($M = 3.33$). There was a significant difference in scores of the ability to mobilize and coordinate human resources to organize experiential learning activities, with the lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 2.54$) assessing with a lower score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.38$). The survey result of the ability to prepare documents and prepare material facilities, technical facilities for experiential learning activities showed that there was a little difference in evaluation score, with a

little lower scores of lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.14$ and $M = 3.02$ respectively) than students. The score of lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.92$) is a little higher than students ($M = 3.77$) when assessing the ability to estimate the financial requirement to organize experiential learning activities.

The Ability to Design Experiential Learning Activities

The survey result of the ability to name the experiential learning activities to determine the objectives and tasks and design the tool to assess the outcome of experiential learning activities. There was no significant difference in evaluation scores, with the score of Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.90$, $M = 3.34$ and $M = 2.50$ respectively) is a little lower than students ($M = 4.15$, $M = 3.72$ and $M = 2.86$ respectively). There was no significant difference in scores of the ability to create specific content and determine the appropriate organizational form of experiential learning activities, with Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.20$ and $M = 3.12$ respectively) assessing with a little higher score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.05$ and $M = 2.89$ respectively). However, there was a significant difference in scores of the abil-

ity to organize human resources to implement the plan, show the implementation progress, with the Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 2.52$) assessing with a lower score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.34$).

The ability to promote the implementation of experiential learning activities

The survey result of the ability to disseminate the plan of experiential learning activities showed that there was no significant difference in evaluation score, with the Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.62$) assessing with a little higher score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.50$). There was a significant difference in scores of the ability to manage the time, supervise, control, adjust the plan and competence to handle the situation while implementing the program of experiential learning activities, with the lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.20$, $M = 2.68$ and $M = 2.80$ respectively) assessing with a lower score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.45$, $M = 3.38$ and $M = 3.06$ respectively). There was no significant difference in scores of the ability to apply methods and techniques which are appropriate to objectives and contents of experiential learning activities, and comment, assess and learn from experience the result of experiential learning activities, with the Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.38$ and $M = 3.04$ respectively) assessing with a little lower score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.39$ and $M = 3.14$ respectively).

The ability to coordinate human resources while organizing experiential learning activities

The Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff assessed the ability to coordinate human resources while organizing experiential learning activities with lower scores compared to self- assessment scores of students. Of these, the ability to communicate appropriately with mobilized people of students got the lowest scores from the lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 2.48$). There

was a significant difference in score of the ability to determine the human resources to organize experiential learning activities and set up, adjust relationships while disseminating, with the Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 2.78$ and $M = 2.64$ respectively) assessing with lower scores than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.10$ and $M = 3.12$ respectively).

The ability to assess the result and adjust experiential learning activities

The survey result of the ability to establish the criteria to determine the outcome and determine the process, methods to determine the effect of experiential learning activities showed that there was a significant difference in evaluation score, with the lowest score ($M = 2.72$ and $M = 2.70$ respectively) from the Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff. There was a significant difference in score of the ability to determine contents to assess the result of experiential learning activities, with the Lecturer and Youth Union and Students Association staff ($M = 3.30$) assessing with a higher score than self- assessment score of students ($M = 3.01$).

DISCUSSION

This research examined the ability to organize experiential learning activities of students. The main findings indicate that the abilities related to organizing experiential learning activities of students were highly trained, and improved high. Thus, this result supports previous research conducted by Itin (1999), who found the experienced learning has been played a crucial role in progressive education. The evaluation scores of the survey showed that there was no significant difference in scores of the abilities to prepare for organizing experiential learning activities and promoting the implementation of experiential learning activities between Vietnamese undergraduate students, lecturers, and Youth Union and Student Association staff. However, students still got lower scores compared to self- assessment scores in preparing documents, mobilizing, and coordinate human resources, preparing material facilities, and tech-

nical facilities for experiential learning activities. Vietnamese lecturers, and Youth Union and Student Association staffs thought that students have not (i) prepared enough appropriate documents, material facilities, and technical facilities; (ii) anticipated problems and planned out a to-do list to using documents, material facilities and technical facilities; (iii) assisted organizers and staffs in connecting successfully with each other; (iv) had experience in dealing with unexpected events occurring while organizing educational activities; (v) had enough experience in managing. Besides, students had great expectations of themselves for training high professional skills related to organizing experiential learning activities such as determining the appropriate time and place and finding out about the characteristics of participants. This research also found that students got lower scores compared to self-assessment scores in the abilities to design experiential learning activities and coordinate human resources while organizing experiential learning activities because of the difference in professional skills and experiences of teaching between students and teachers. Vietnamese lecturers and Youth Union and Student Association staffs had higher expectations of students for determining the objectives, content, form, and methods to organizing and designing a useful tool for assessing the result of experiential learning activities than their performance. The research showed that students applied relatively high abilities, who were educated and trained in the learning process, in organizing experiential learning activities. Nevertheless, the overall assessment also showed that they must be further fostered and trained to improve professional skills, gain more useful experiences in preparing, designing, promoting the implementation, coordinating human resources, assessing the result, and adjusting experiential learning activities.

LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. The main limitations of the present study naturally include the sampling process used. The sample was drawn from only one city of the Ho Chi Minh City University of Education, Vietnam. The random selection of participants alleviates this concern to a significant degree but does not entirely

remedy that shortcoming. Future research on the abilities of students from the department of education in university might extend the methods to improve professional skills, especially the ability to organize experiential learning activities of students. Future studies should aim to replicate results in a larger sample, not only in Ho Chi Minh City.

CONCLUSION

Experiential learning is the practical usage influenced by the principles of pragmatism in education theory. The initial results suggest that the capacity to coordinate student interaction events has been educated and relatively highly developed. To the best of the authors' knowledge, this is the first study, Vietnamese undergraduate students, lecturers, and Youth Union and Student Association staffs' perception of the ability to organize experiential learning activities. The results of this research are necessary for Vietnamese educators to introduce activities to support students' ability to organize experiential learning activities. Well-organized learning activities will teach students the abilities to apply knowledge, generate positive encouragement for learning, and increase student engagement in education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Multiple recommendations can be made. The study results helped to provide key recommendations and foundations on how to improve the ability of Ho Chi Minh City Education University, Vietnam to organize experiential learning activities. Furthermore, this work includes crucial considerations and consequences for various rates to boost the capacity for students of Vietnamese higher education institutions to coordinate experience learning activities. In order to properly present participants' experiences in a more detailed interview, future work will concentrate more on a wide variety of participants.

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