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# Experiential Learning Slant: Program for B-School Students to Adapt Leadership Skills

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## Abstract

**Background:**This research is focused on adapting leadership skill among B-School students to ensure that the institution produces trained students to lead the future. Whether it be job or business post MBA, the most critical skill of every student in industry would be interpersonal skills and leadership skills. There are lot many skills with respect to leadership that is required in workplace starting from strategic thinking, creativity to being flexible and a maintaining a good lead with team members. This helps students in team building, effective work, defining identities post their MBA.

**Objectives:** The main objective of this study is to share a way to support B-School students in adapting leadership skills and that has been done using experiential learning as a key factor.

**Methods:**A secondary review research has been carried out in this study process to identify the gaps in existing strategy to adapt leadership skill among B-School students. It has been identified that the model suggested by Jestine (2021) and Stephanie (2021) are highly suitable for developing leadership skills with few variables add-on such as practical exposure, pre-course and specific experiential exercise.

**Results:**The hybrid model designed here with reference to existing parent model consist of pre-preparation, input, process, assurance of learning and finally learning outcome with reward.

**Conclusions:** The benefit of such kind of research supports in leadership skills development among students starting from teaching how to lead, helps in understanding networking till opportunity to compete in corporate world and lot more.

*Keywords:*Experiential Learning, Leadership, B-School, Strategy and Skill Development

## 1.      Introduction

It is said that leadership is the way in which an individual guide their followers in the right path to accomplish a task. When it comes to organization leaders, it is how the employees are guided by their leaders to achieve the goal of highest profit. And this skill needs to be shaped among the students or can also be called the future leaders who can bring about a change with their innovative thinking and properly leading a team. Over the past few decades, there is a huge demand for leadership skill development progress and similarly many attempts carried out to increase the skill potential. From an article by Sharma (2022) it is clearly stated that upskilling of young professionals (students) can

support in unlocking both their leadership potential as well as collaborative potential. For students form B-School, the expectation beyond technical proficiency are creativity, ideation, stress tolerance, problem solving, negotiation, critical thinking, team leading, strategic thinking, emotional intelligence and lot more. To the current agile workplace that is being experienced by every employee in work environment power skill (leadership skill) along with technical skill is an instrumental requirement.

The importance of having leadership skill for students is that it inspires them to learn more and also acquire skills on career development. It guides them on how to shape their career growth and plan accordingly. Students who possess leadership skills have various qualities such as time efficiency, proper execution, strategic planning, continuous learning and optimized habit. These qualities keep them focused and also increase their productivity day by day to achieve the end result on career growth. On the other hand, the absence of leadership skill can weaken the objective of the education system. Absence of leadership can lead to make students not only weak in leading a team but they cannot also play a team player role in proper way because they won't be able to understand what their leader trying to achieve. Leadership skill is not about only leading a team, a student with good leadership skill can analyze another leader to recognize their strategy and motive. According to Stephanie (2021) leadership skill gives upper hand in this competitive world and such skill has to be taught in a practical manner but yet leadership and team management is educated theoretically.

While trying to adapt leadership skill is the motive here, understanding the concept of being a leader and learning outcome is difficult task. In current system of adapting leadership skill there are certain challenges such as lack of creating proper mindset, having an introductory session because this skill completely different from all other that they learn in B-School, action strategy and lack of practical exposure. Apart from these major challenges the other challenges are such as lack of confidence, dealing with stress and anxiety, reacting to sudden change, managing different situations at a single point, being multi-tasked and maintaining balance. The statement of problem to this research study is as given below,

- Students lack on adapting to leadership skill due to many challenges starting from confidence to strategic planning.
- This lack on adaptability leads to students being weak in team work and leading, this has a greater impact during their work in the current corporate world.
- "Students the future leaders" is the statement that is being continuously repeated for many decades, and this scenario can be a big obstacle to make this statement a reality.
- Most of the models that exist nowadays for adapting leadership skill doesn't have the variable of practical exposure, a leader without practical learning cannot handle a situation when they face it in corporate world.

## 2. Objectives

With reference to the above statement of problem the objective of this research study is as follows,

- Perform a literature review on challenges faced by students due to lack of leadership skill and challenges in adapting leadership skill.
- Understand the student's current environment on learning and adapting to any new sill which can help in devising a model that they are comfortable with.

- Understand the issues faced by students in adapting the skill and identify the points where an improvement is necessary.
- Analyze the existing model that supports in adapting leadership skills and identify the gaps in current model.
- Develop a model that supports in adapting leadership skill incorporating practical exposure.

## 3.     Methods

According to Stephanie and et al (2021) in their study titled "Enhancing Experiential Education in an MBA Coaching Program" has stated that their intention is to share the model on coaching program for MBA students on the concept of leadership skill. This research study provides a voluntary learning model for MBA students and at end academic year, the model recognizes each the student based on their performance. This model also suggests in recording the training and performance of students and add it to closure at end of each academic year. This is done to identify gap and points to improve, to maintain a sustainably developing model.  The model suggested in this study is a process flow starting from inputs followed by process, learning outcomes, assurance of learning and reward under which there are multiple factors that try to establish leadership skill among students.

Jestine and et al (2021) has performed a research study on the title "Student Perceptions of Leadership Skills Necessary for Digital Transformation" where it is stated that leadership skill and digital technology skill are both corresponding when it comes to managing a workplace that is completely dependent on digital technologies. In this study they attempted to test the student's perception on leadership skills in digital environment to find the balance among these two variables and their competency. Through an analytical study in this situation they have identified that there is need to provide an enhanced opportunity to develop the leadership skills among students. This has been by certain recommendations such as discussion of digital skills, adapting class activities, creating a digital mindset among students and initiating discussion a week prior to semester commencement to prepare students to the mindset.

 The study titled "Crisis Leadership: The New Imperative for MBA Curricula" by Attila and et al (2021) has stated that MBA courses must include crisis leadership in the program to educate students on what a strategic leader would and must do during a crisis. This paper also mentioned that having such kind of subject MBA program can set a basis to the program in being implanted to crisis content explicitly. This research was exploratory and it has been also mentioned that crisis leadership has not been received a good level of recognition in MBA as in other papers that are in the program.

"Democratic Values and Leadership Skills Among Students at Higher Level" a research study conducted by Kshama Pandey and et al (2021) has mentioned that the expected competency among students with respect to leadership skills is not being generated impulsively. Training democratic skills and leadership skills is what leads to preparing students towards a sustainable suture on building an independent world is what this study states. In this study it has been identified that students enhance their abilities and skills by understanding the curriculum as well as the surroundings. This paper has also showcased that developing student's leadership skills can both directly and indirectly support the society, community, industries and also the nation.

A study titled "Walking Our Evidence-Based Talk: The Case of Leadership Development in Business Schools" done by Hannes et al (2022) has performed a research based on data collected and analyzed

through 60 interviews among top business school directors of leadership centers. The analysis showcased that there is a lack of Evidence-Based Leadership Development in academic context. The model is highly developed with involvement of external forces that ensures feedback development and also will showcase the outside world to each and every student. The paper also stated that it is highly important in merging internal practices along with external needs to give rightfulness to value the students hard work.

According to Robert (2022) study entitled "An Innovative MBA Class in Organizational Behavior and its Relationship to Experiential Learning" has presented a pedagogy for organizational behaviour in this article that supports in driving the students in graduate class. Their pedagogical course has integrated a various collection of aspects in experiential learning to focus on developing the student's management skills. The paper strongly recommends that there is a need for modification in the cohort dynamics for MBA students.

A conceptual study has been performed through reviewing articles published in various journals under the concept of leadership skill adapting for B-School students. And from the review performed for this study, the observed data are as follows,

- 90% of the students has confirmed that they gained skills through practical exposure. Students need more practical exposure towards the concepts to understand and gain more leadership skills. (Stephanie 2021)
- The expected competency on the leadership skills are not up to the mark of requirements when it is compared with the organization environment. (Pandey 2021)
- After having an introductory session, students' performance is increasing from 65% to 72%. Starting a pre-course on leadership skills and its necessities to students can support in making students prepared for a new skill learning session. (Jestine 2021)
- It is found that lecturing is still dominant in classroom followed by student presentation on certain topics and collective learning with project-based learning. Around 97% of students believe that practical learning can aid in understanding a concept better and increase their productive & performance in both academics and skill growth. (Scott 2017)
- Proving learning outcome is when students understand what they are studying and why they are studying it, and can compare with what they gained at end of each semester. So, the observation here is that learning outcome has to be provided before assessments.
- Experiential learning has many benefits such as it supports in mirroring real scenarios and produces expected learning during the learning process. (Phil 2017)
- At the same time, it is also said that experiential learning needs a deep involvement from faculties as well as students to gain the ultimate goal of skill development. (Phil 2017)
- Game based learning and activity-based learning can be useful in student learning and skill development when compared to regular classroom teachings and presentations. (Sharon 2022)
- Obtaining feedback and evaluating them to continuously improvise the teaching model can support in increased performance from students in forth coming batches. So, feedback and review must be a major variable included in the teaching model. (Denise 2022)

## 4. Results

From the review performed and findings observed from various articles, here this study suggests a model for leadership skill development through experiential learning and practical exposure. The model suggested is as shown below,
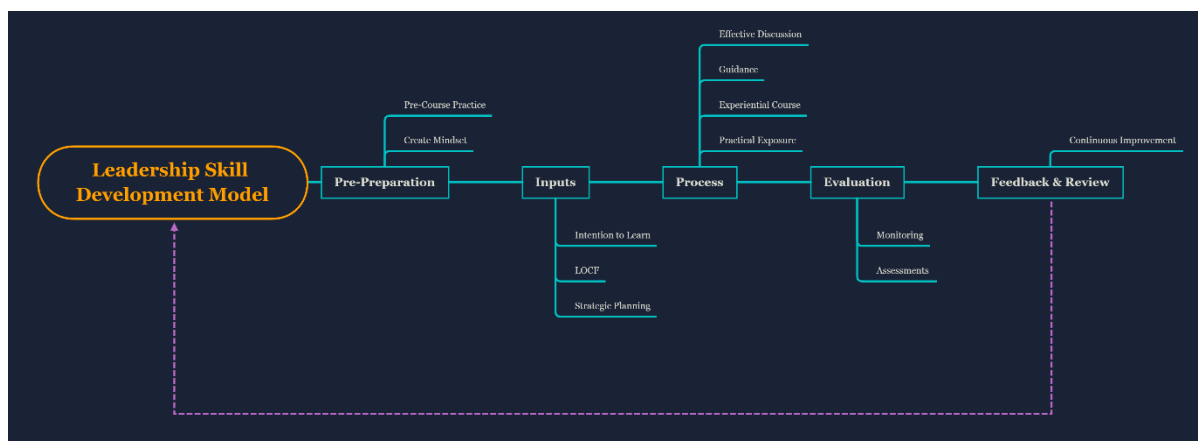


**Fig 1: -** Experiential Learning Slant forLeadership Skill Development

As shown in above model figure (fig 1), this model is a five-stage process which supports in leadership skill development and focuses on continuous improvement. Each stage in the model flows in a way that student first gets prepared then understands the need of leadership skill followed by practical exposure to situations and finally evaluating their performance and continuous improvement. The stages involved has been briefly explained below,

- *Pre-Preparation:* The initial stage where before the course commences, an introductory session and brainstorming needs to performed. This is done to make students break ice onto the new concept of learning leadership skill. This particular stage also can be used for ice-breaking among students and faculty because in forth-coming stages there will be more collaborative learning and experiments. At the end of this stage, students will have created a mindset on leadership skills, abilities and necessities.

- *Inputs:* The stage after preparation is where the input comes, the point where student is fed with all information regarding the skill development course on what they are going to achieve, what is the way this course is planned, how is it going to be achieved and lot more. This is the stage where the strategy on how to learn will be explained and course plan also known as LOCF will be shared with students to educate them how each day course will go and what they can expect in forth-coming days. In other words, this part of input providing is where the students learn what they are going to do which can create an intention within themselves to learn and develop leadership skill.

- *Process:* The main stage where the learning happens (process stage). Here we propose to practice constant discussion & meetings to have a lot of interactive sessions and interaction between students as well as with the faculty. Followed by sessions with organization leaders can boost the student's motivation to study better ad interacting with them can give an idea to students on what they are expected to be as a leader. Following this is where experiential learning and practical exposures plays a major role.

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        o  *Experiential Learning:* Having workshops conducted on leadership can give them a realistic idea on what is happening and what they must do in certain scenarios. Along with this having case study contest and group discussion on situations and topics can bring out on how student will act as a leader for the scenarios given.

        o  *Practical exposure:* The part where students skills are put to test prior to assessment is practical exposure. The process of participating in various events and business plan competition can support students in developing their strategical planning skills. And conducting events and putting up stalls at events can train them in team management and decision-making skills, where they decide what must be done and who must do it from their team. This develops them as a leader in realistic environment where they organize an event, put up stalls and target revenue, plan a strategy to achieve the goal with entire team and lot more.

- *Evaluation:* This is the stage where the skills gained and concepts learning by students are put to evaluation using assessments. These assessments will be usually during the conclusion of course and during the course constant monitoring of each student's performance in practical exposure can give an idea on their learning. Through the monitoring students can be trained based on their performance during the course progress.

- *Feedback & Review:* This part comes post the end of semester where students feedback on the teaching model is collected and based on the review on the feedback the model will be put forth for continuous improvement for the upcoming batches.

## 5.    Discussion

It is very clear that gaining leadership skills by students can support them in learning the art of how to build team relationship, achieving task as well as defining identifies based on expertise. This leadership skill learning also provides opportunities for students to demonstrate effective interpersonal skill and communication skill. In this concept provided here, the learners also known as students will be actively engaged through observation, participation as well as interaction will fellow students and faculties. The advantage of having such leadership skill development model under the concept of experiential learning is as follows,

- Practical learning and exposure always give an upper hand in understanding the concept in realistic environment rather than that of lecture sessions.

- Experiential learning provides an opportunity to experience the real-life situation while learning which gives students an upper hand on what to expect in their career as a leader.

- Students who go through leadership skill learning in this experiential learning model will be budding leaders who can respond swiftly and suitably to any scenario that arises in their workplace.

- Learning any concept through experiential learning can give a deeper understanding to the concept which can be replicated through this model too.

- This learning process provides students the capacity for reflective judgement, critical thinking, knowledge application, problem solving, decision making and lot more abilities.

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