

Activity-Based Learning for Literacy Development Among Non-Teaching Staff

Strategies and Outcomes

V. Shanthi¹, Dr. R. Malathi²

¹Research Scholar in English, Department of English, Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore

²Associate Professor of English & Research Supervisor, Nehru Arts and Science College (Autonomous), Coimbatore

Abstract

This study explores the efficacy of Activity-Based Learning (ABL) as a tool for literacy development among non-teaching staff in educational institutions. Recognizing the challenges faced by non-teaching staff in acquiring functional literacy due to time constraints, limited access to traditional learning resources, and socio-economic factors, the study implements an engaging and interactive approach. The activities are designed to be contextually relevant, focusing on tasks such as reading workplace documents, filling forms, and writing basic communications. The strategies employed include collaborative learning sessions, role-playing scenarios, digital literacy games, and workplace-based problem-solving tasks. These methods aim to enhance not only literacy skills but also confidence and active participation in professional settings. The outcomes reveal improved reading and writing proficiency, greater self-reliance in workplace communication, and enhanced job performance. The study concludes with recommendations for integrating ABL into institutional training programs to ensure sustainable literacy development and personal growth among non-teaching staff, contributing to a more inclusive and efficient workplace environment.

Keywords: Activity-Based Learning (ABL), Literacy Enhancement, Non-Teaching Staff, Experiential Learning, Workplace Education, Adult Literacy Programs

Introduction

Literacy is a critical skill, yet many adults, including non-teaching staff in educational institutions, lack the foundational reading and comprehension abilities necessary for professional growth. Despite working in academic settings, non-teaching staff often miss opportunities for formal literacy education. Activity-Based Learning (ABL), rooted in experiential learning theories such as Kolb's Learning Cycle, emphasizes active engagement and real-world application, making it an effective strategy for adult learners. This study explores how ABL can enhance literacy by employing practical, work-related activities that address the unique needs of non-teaching staff. Literacy, often considered the foundation of lifelong learning, plays a critical role in personal and professional growth. However, a significant portion of adults, including non-teaching staff in educational institutions, struggle with basic literacy skills such as reading comprehension and vocabulary development. These individuals often work in environments that demand interaction with

written materials, such as notices, instructions, and reports. Their literacy challenges not only hinder workplace efficiency but also limit their ability to grow professionally and engage fully with their responsibilities. While formal education programs typically focus on teaching staff or students, the needs of non-teaching personnel often go unnoticed. This group is critical to the smooth functioning of institutions, yet they rarely receive tailored opportunities for skill development, particularly in literacy. Traditional, classroom-based approaches are often inadequate for adult learners, as they may lack immediate relevance to the learners' daily tasks and fail to actively engage them. Activity-Based Learning (ABL) offers a solution by emphasizing hands-on, participatory methods that connect learning to real-world contexts. Rooted in theories of experiential learning, such as Kolb's Learning Cycle, ABL encourages learners to engage actively with tasks, reflect on their experiences, and apply new knowledge to practical scenarios. Similarly, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory underscores the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in learning, making collaborative and interactive activities central to effective literacy enhancement. This study focuses on the application of ABL to enhance the literacy skills of non-teaching staff. By integrating activities such as collaborative reading, role-playing, and interactive discussions into training sessions, the study seeks to make learning not only relevant but also engaging and enjoyable. The aim is to bridge the gap between theoretical literacy instruction and practical application, enabling participants to use their improved reading and vocabulary skills effectively in their workplace. The findings of this research will contribute to the field of adult education by demonstrating how tailored ABL strategies can address the unique literacy needs of non-teaching staff. The study also aims to highlight the broader implications of integrating ABL in workplace learning programs, fostering a culture of continuous learning and professional growth among all employees.

Literature Survey

The use of ABL in adult education has been extensively supported by research. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory suggests that learning is most effective when individuals actively engage in experiences, reflect on them, and apply what they have learned. Similarly, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory highlights the role of social interaction and scaffolding in facilitating learning, which aligns with collaborative and role-play activities. Previous studies in English Language Teaching (ELT) have shown that context-driven, interactive methods significantly improve literacy skills by connecting theory to practice. However, research on applying these methods to non-teaching staff remains limited, creating a need for tailored approaches that address their specific literacy gaps. Activity-Based Learning (ABL) has gained recognition in adult education as an effective approach to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (1984) forms the foundation of ABL, proposing that learning occurs through a continuous cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application. This model is particularly relevant to adult learners, who benefit from hands-on activities that connect directly to their lived experiences. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in the learning process. In the context of ABL, collaborative activities such as group discussions and peer learning foster a supportive environment where learners can acquire new skills through guided interaction. Additionally, Knowles' theory of andragogy (1980) highlights that adult learners are self-directed and benefit from problem-solving tasks that have immediate relevance to their work or personal life. Research in English Language Teaching (ELT) further supports the integration of task-based methods for developing literacy. Ellis (2003) argues that task-based learning enhances language acquisition by promoting meaningful interaction and contextual learning.

Studies on workplace literacy programs have shown that incorporating real-world materials, such as workplace documents and scenarios, leads to higher engagement and better retention of skills (Dewey, 1938). Despite these findings, there is limited research focused on applying ABL to non-teaching staff in educational institutions, leaving a gap that this study aims to address.

Problem Definition

Non-teaching staff often face literacy challenges that hinder their workplace efficiency and professional development. Traditional classroom-based methods fail to engage adult learners effectively, as they often lack relevance to their everyday tasks. This study addresses the gap by implementing ABL strategies tailored to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary skills, with a focus on real-world applicability. Non-teaching staff in educational institutions play a crucial role in administrative and operational functions, yet they often face challenges in literacy that impact their efficiency and confidence. These challenges may include difficulty in understanding official documents, interpreting instructions, and communicating effectively in written form. Traditional methods of literacy training are often generic and fail to address the specific contexts and needs of this group. The lack of targeted literacy programs for non-teaching staff creates a significant gap in their professional development. Moreover, the absence of engaging and practical teaching methodologies makes it difficult for adult learners to stay motivated and retain newly acquired skills. This study seeks to overcome these barriers by employing ABL strategies designed to make literacy learning interactive, enjoyable, and directly applicable to the workplace.

Materials & Methods

Participants

The study involved 30 non-teaching staff members from an educational institution, including administrative assistants, maintenance staff, and clerks. Participants were selected through purposive sampling, ensuring diversity in age, gender, and literacy levels.

Study Design

A mixed-methods approach was used, combining quantitative pre- and post-tests to measure literacy improvement and qualitative interviews to gather participant feedback.

Activities included

Collaborative Reading Exercises: Participants worked in groups to read and discuss workplace documents, such as memos and manuals. **Role-Playing Scenarios:** Participants acted out job-related situations requiring reading comprehension, such as interpreting notices or forms. **Interactive Discussions:** Facilitators led discussions on relevant reading materials, encouraging participants to share interpretations and learn new vocabulary.

Findings & Results

The quantitative results showed significant improvements in participants' literacy skills:

Skill Pre-Test Scores (%) Post-Test Scores (%) Improvement (%)

Reading Comprehension	42	78	36
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Vocabulary Development	45	81	36
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Qualitative interviews revealed increased confidence and a positive shift in attitudes toward learning. Participants appreciated the practical and interactive nature of the activities.

Interpretation & Discussion

The findings align with Kolb's and Vygotsky's theories, emphasizing that active engagement and social interaction enhance learning. Collaborative reading activities fostered peer learning and critical thinking, while role-play helped participants contextualize their literacy skills in real-world scenarios. The integration of workplace-relevant content bridged the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, making learning meaningful and engaging. These strategies addressed the specific literacy needs of non-teaching staff, demonstrating that ABL can effectively enhance adult education outcomes. The findings support the effectiveness of ABL in enhancing literacy among non-teaching staff, aligning with Kolb's theory that experiential learning fosters deeper engagement and skill acquisition. The use of real-world materials and workplace scenarios provided a context that made the learning meaningful and directly applicable. Vygotsky's concept of scaffolding was evident in the collaborative activities, where participants supported each other in understanding texts and solving problems. This peer interaction not only improved literacy skills but also fostered a sense of community and shared learning. Moreover, the study underscores the importance of tailoring educational interventions to adult learners' specific contexts and needs. The focus on workplace-relevant content bridged the gap between theoretical learning and practical application, leading to improved retention and motivation. The results also highlight the potential of ABL to address literacy challenges in similar adult education settings, particularly for underrepresented groups.

Conclusion

This study highlights the potential of ABL as a transformative approach to literacy enhancement among non-teaching staff. By incorporating collaborative, interactive, and context-driven activities, ABL strategies not only improved reading skills but also boosted participants' motivation and confidence. Future research should explore the scalability of these methods across diverse institutions and examine their long-term impact on professional development. This study demonstrates that Activity-Based Learning is a powerful tool for improving literacy skills among non-teaching staff in educational institutions. By integrating collaborative, interactive, and context-driven activities, ABL not only enhances reading comprehension and vocabulary but also fosters confidence and a positive attitude toward learning. The findings have significant implications for adult education and workplace training programs, suggesting that tailored, engaging methodologies can address literacy gaps effectively. Future research could explore the long-term impact of ABL and its application across diverse adult learner groups. Expanding these methods to other workplace contexts could further validate their scalability and effectiveness.

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