



Project-Based Learning through Seminar Organization: Developing Transferable Skills among Office Administration Students

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ABSTRACT

Vocational higher education requires learning experiences that connect classroom activities with authentic tasks and transferable skills. This study examines how Project-Based Learning through seminar organization supports transferable skills among Office Administration students. A descriptive qualitative approach was used with 35 students enrolled in a MICE Management course at Pajajaran Insan Cinta Bangsa Bandung Polytechnic. Data were obtained from observations, project documents, seminar documentation, and student reflections during the Z Talk Business Seminar involving approximately 75 participants. The findings show that authentic seminar participation created opportunities to practice communication, collaboration, problem-solving, time management, responsibility, adaptability, and professionalism. The study highlights seminar organization as an authentic PjBL context for integrating theoretical knowledge, practical action, and reflective learning.

INTRODUCTION

Vocational higher education is expected to prepare students for changing professional environments by integrating disciplinary knowledge with practical and transferable skills. Students are increasingly required to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, solve problems, manage time, adapt to changing situations, and demonstrate professional responsibility. Consequently, vocational learning needs to provide learning experiences that allow students to apply knowledge in contexts that resemble authentic work situations (Johnsen et al., 2024).

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) offers a pedagogical approach that positions students as active participants in planning, implementing, solving problems, and evaluating a project. Previous studies indicate that project-based environments can support interpersonal and transferable skills in higher education, including communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and teamwork (Crespí et al., 2022).

The educational value of PjBL becomes more visible when projects are connected to authentic contexts. In vocational education, authentic projects can expose students to constraints, stakeholder interactions, deadlines, and unexpected problems that are difficult to reproduce fully through classroom simulation. Such experiences provide opportunities for students to integrate knowledge, skills, and professional attitudes while completing meaningful tasks (Noviansyah & Sudira, 2020).

Office Administration education provides a relevant context for authentic Project-Based Learning because professional tasks require coordination, communication, document preparation, participant services, time management, and problem-solving. Seminar organization is particularly suitable because students must coordinate a sequence of activities, prepare administrative and operational requirements, communicate with speakers and participants, and respond to conditions during implementation.

Although PjBL has been widely discussed, contextual evidence from vocational higher education is still important to show how authentic seminar projects are experienced by students and how these experiences support transferable skills. This study therefore focuses specifically on the organization of the Z Talk Business Seminar as a learning project rather than on event success or general workplace readiness as the primary outcome. The study aims to analyze the implementation of PjBL through seminar organization and identify transferable skills developed through students' participation in the project.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Project-Based Learning in Vocational Higher Education

Project-Based Learning is an active learning approach in which students engage in a sustained project requiring planning, task execution, problem-solving, collaboration, and evaluation. In vocational education, a project can bridge conceptual learning and practical performance because students apply knowledge while producing an observable outcome.

Research supports the relevance of PjBL for interpersonal and transferable competencies. (Crespí et al., 2022) found that PBL can support interpersonal competences in higher education, while reported development of critical thinking, teamwork, and communication in a project-based business-school context. (Green & du Plessis, 2023) also examined PjBL in vocational higher education in relation to 4Cs skills.

Authentic Learning and Transferable Skills

Authentic learning emphasizes meaningful tasks that resemble or are connected to real-life practices. In vocational education, authenticity can be created through projects involving real participants, stakeholders, constraints, and consequences. Students are therefore required to make decisions and adapt their actions rather than simply reproduce procedures in a controlled classroom exercise (Sudarsono et al., 2022).

Transferable skills refer to capabilities that can be applied across different academic, organizational, and professional contexts. In this study, the observed skills include communication, collaboration, problem-solving, time management, responsibility, adaptability, and professionalism. These dimensions are directly aligned with the learning activities and observations documented in the IC-HEES project.

Conceptual Framework

The framework positions PjBL as the learning approach, seminar organization as the authentic project context, student engagement and reflection as central learning processes, and transferable skills as the principal learning outcomes identified through qualitative evidence (Riadi & Zelmiyanti, 2023).

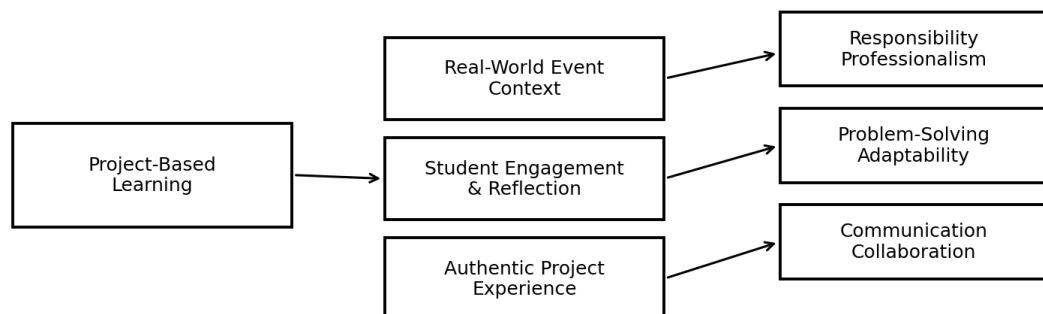


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Seminar-Based Project Learning and Transferable Skills Development

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to examine the implementation of Project-Based Learning through the organization of an authentic seminar in vocational higher education. The design was selected because the study sought to describe students' participation, experiences, challenges, and observable transferable skills during the learning process rather than test a statistical causal relationship (Riduwan, 2015).

The research was conducted in the Office Administration Study Program at Pajajaran Insan Cinta Bangsa (ICB) Bandung Polytechnic. Participants consisted of 35 students enrolled in the MICE Management course who were directly involved in organizing the Z Talk Business Seminar. The seminar involved approximately 75 participants. Students were directly responsible for preparation and implementation rather than acting only as observers.

Data were collected through observation, analysis of project documents, seminar documentation, and student reflections. Observations focused on planning, communication, teamwork, coordination, problem-solving, time management, participant services, and seminar implementation. Documents included the seminar proposal, schedules, task distributions, and reports. Reflections identified perceptions of the learning experience, challenges, strategies for addressing problems, and competencies considered important during the project.

Data were analyzed thematically through data reduction, organization, interpretation, and conclusion drawing. Evidence was categorized into communication, collaboration, problem-solving, time management, responsibility, adaptability, and professionalism. Credibility was strengthened through triangulation across observations, documents, event documentation, and student reflections (Rachmawati, n.d.).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Implementation of Authentic Project-Based Learning

The PjBL implementation in the Z Talk Business Seminar followed a sequence of identifying the seminar concept and objectives, developing the event plan, distributing responsibilities, preparing administrative and operational requirements, implementing the seminar, and conducting evaluation and reflection. This sequence allowed students to experience a complete project cycle rather than a single classroom assignment (Green & du Plessis, 2023).

The present study focused on the team of 35 students responsible for organizing the Z Talk Business Seminar, which involved approximately 75 participants. Students were responsible for preparing and implementing the seminar rather than participating only as classroom observers.

Table 1. Students involved in the Z Talk Business Seminar project.

Event project	Student team	Students	Participants
Z Talk Business Seminar	Seminar Team	35	Approximately 75
Total	1 team	35	Approximately 75

Student Engagement and Authentic Learning Experience

The 35 students were actively involved from seminar planning to evaluation. Their responsibilities included preparing seminar requirements, coordinating with team members and stakeholders, communicating with participants and speakers, managing operational activities, and evaluating outcomes. Because the project involved an actual seminar and real participants, students encountered situations that could not always be predicted through classroom simulation.

Unexpected changes, participant needs, coordination difficulties, technical issues, and time constraints required students to communicate, collaborate, make decisions, and solve problems during seminar implementation. The authenticity of the project was therefore reflected not only in the seminar as the final product but also in the learning process and decisions students made while the project was underway.

Transferable Skills Developed through the Projects

Table 2. Transferable Skills Identified through Authentic Project Participation

Transferable skill	Evidence from project experience
Communication	Communicating with participants, speakers, committee members, and stakeholders.
Collaboration	Coordinating tasks and responsibilities within event committees.
Problem-solving	Responding to unexpected situations during preparation and implementation.
Time management	Completing preparation and operational tasks according to deadlines.
Responsibility	Managing assigned duties and completing tasks within the project team.
Adaptability	Adjusting actions to changing conditions during event implementation.
Professionalism	Providing appropriate services and interacting with stakeholders professionally.

The findings indicate that organizing the Z Talk Business Seminar created a learning environment in which students moved from conceptual understanding to practical action. The seminar required students to perform interconnected tasks and respond to real conditions, making learning more contextual. This is consistent with research emphasizing that project-based environments can strengthen interpersonal and transferable skills in higher education (Crespí et al., 2022)

Communication and collaboration emerged strongly because event organization is inherently interdependent. Students needed to coordinate schedules, responsibilities, participant services, and operational tasks. This finding is consistent with Saimon et al. (2023), who reported the potential of PjBL to strengthen communication, collaboration, and other transferable competencies among college students.

Problem-solving and adaptability were particularly associated with the authentic character of the projects. Students encountered changing conditions and participant needs that required immediate responses. In a simulated assignment, many conditions can be controlled by the lecturer. In a public event, students had to make decisions within operational constraints. This provides opportunities to practice flexible problem-solving and is aligned with research

linking project-based learning with critical thinking and career-related skills (Saimon et al., 2023).

Time management and responsibility developed through deadlines and distributed roles. Students were responsible for completing preparations before the event and fulfilling operational duties during implementation. The project made time and responsibility visible as part of learning rather than abstract concepts. Similar evidence has been reported in vocational learning contexts where project activities support soft skills and employability-related competencies (Zulaekah et al., 2023).

Professionalism developed through direct interaction with participants, speakers, and stakeholders. Students had to present themselves appropriately, provide services, and coordinate in an organized manner. This suggests that authentic PjBL can integrate knowledge, practical skills, and professional attitudes within a single learning activity.

Taken together, the findings support authentic seminar-based project learning as a pedagogical strategy in vocational higher education. The cycle of planning, implementation, problem-solving, evaluation, and reflection allowed students to integrate theoretical knowledge with practical and transferable skills within one coherent learning project.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The study found that Project-Based Learning through seminar organization provided meaningful learning experiences for Office Administration students in vocational higher education. Thirty-five students were directly involved in organizing the Z Talk Business Seminar with approximately 75 participants and experienced the project cycle from planning and preparation to implementation, evaluation, and reflection. The learning process created opportunities to develop communication, collaboration, problem-solving, time management, responsibility, adaptability, and professionalism.

Vocational higher education institutions can integrate authentic projects into courses where students interact with real participants and stakeholders. Lecturers should provide clear project roles, milestones, reflection activities, and assessment criteria so that practical activity is explicitly connected to learning outcomes (Noviansyah & Sudira, 2020). Authentic projects can also be strengthened through collaboration with external stakeholders and community or industry events.

FURTHER STUDY

This study still has limitations; therefore, further research on the topic is required.

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