

# The Effectiveness of Self Development Program through Experiential Learning in Improving the Excellence of IPDN Praja Resources

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## Abstract

This study aims at obtaining a realistic description of the effectiveness of self-development programs through experiential learning in improving the excellence of Praja resources in IPDN Jatinangor. It focuses on self-development program and experiential learning. This study is a field research with a qualitative descriptive method in which it only describes the effectiveness of the experiential method in self-development program to improve the excellence of Praja resources. The study involves 20 Muda Praja, the first level of IPDN's student, from various existing study programs and two observers. The object of the study is experiential learning with five aspects of personality development: self-confidence, communication, interpersonal relationships, leadership and handling stress. The data were collected through the provision of training or learning, observation, questionnaires and interviews. After being analyzed, the results show that experiential learning is very effective in self-development programs for improving the excellence of Praja resources. It can be assumed that the effectiveness of experiential learning is categorized as high.

**Keywords:** experiential learning, IPDN Praja, self-development

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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic situation facing the world, including Indonesia, has forced policy makers in the educational sector to be able to make adjustment in carrying out the learning process. This adjustment is realized through the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (Independent Learning-Independent Campus) policy, in which students are given the opportunity to gain wider learning experiences and new competencies through several learning activities outside their study program (Hendayana 2020).

One of the Missions of IPDN's Vision is becoming a Civil Service Higher Education to educate the government cadres with integrity. It means that every IPDN graduate as a Young Civil Service is able to perform a government leadership figure who exudes ethical values, honesty, loyalty, discipline, courage, commitment, responsibility, self-control, and consistent. In correspondence with the "Nawa Cita" program echoed by President Jokowi, IPDN is expected to become a "candradimuka" campus as a media for training and producing qualified national cadres: "competent, with character and personality".

As a vocational school, IPDN develops civil service resources through three channels, namely teaching, training, and nurturing. Praja stay in the dormitories during study in IPDN. They are also provided by the physical development, technical qualities, and mental attitude.

The findings from the teaching and learning process in the classroom, most of the Praja-especially Muda Praja (the first level of IPDN's student) learn in the class unenthusiastically, sleepy, often stutter when asked, and less motivated. When being asked to speak in front of the class, they are lack of confidence, their communication is also not smooth, the personal relation among praja is not warmth or intimate, their leadership does not often stand out and there is tendency to think negatively so that they often show inappropriate manner when dealing with stress. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct a study on self-development program in order to improve the excellence of the praja resources' quality. Concerning the COVID-19 pandemic situation that has not been fully resolved and in order to achieve goals that are in line with the IPDN mission and vision, praja need an experiential learning model, which meets the needs of the expected graduated profile.

David Kolb develops Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which later became the experiential learning model basis, in the early 1980s. This model emphasizes on a holistic learning model in the learning process. In the experiential learning, the central role in the learning process is the experience. This emphasis distinguishes ELT from other learning theories. Kolb in Baharudin and Wahyuni (2007) stated that the term "experiential" in ELT is used for distinguishing cognitive learning theory, which tends to focus on cognition more than affective and behavioral learning theory, which eliminates the role of subjective experience in the learning process.

As a teaching and learning model, Experiential Learning model activates learners to build knowledge and skills through direct experience. In this sense, Experiential Learning uses experience as a catalyst to help learners develop their capacities and abilities in the learning process.

Darmiany (2010) conducted a classroom action research in the Application of Experiential Learning in Developing Self-Regulated Learning toward 52 students of Student Development Class at the State University of Malang. The result of the study showed that experiential learning through four cyclical stages namely concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation succeeded in helping the students to apply Self-Regulated Learning (SRL) in learning. The improvement of SRL or independent study used, for most students, could be seen in the results of the students' daily study journals analysis in each cycle.

On the other hand, several studies related to experiential learning models conducted on high school students generally yielded findings that the model can improve students' critical thinking skills (Lestari *et al.* 2014; Clark *et al.* 2010; Sholihah *et al.* 2016; Yuliarti *et al.* 2014). The model has also the greatest potential in educational settings and the ability to improve the educational process of educators (Pratiwi 2019).

Kolb in Silberman (2014) notes the advantages and disadvantages of the experiential learning model. The advantages are by applying this model, learning is more effective and its goal can be optimally achieved. Meanwhile, the disadvantages of this model lie in its scope, which is considered still broad and cannot be easily understood so that only few people apply this learning model (Fathurrohman 2015).

## 2. Method

This recent research is a field research with qualitative descriptive method. It only describes the effectiveness of the experiential learning method in the self-development program for the excellence of the Praja resources in IPDN. This research took place in a comprehensive learning process including four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

The data were obtained from questionnaire, direct observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation study. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative data analysis produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people or observed behavior, directed at the background and the individual as a whole. In qualitative analysis, the researcher analyses the data in of descriptive analytic descriptions using deductive, inductive, and comparative thinking patterns.

In analyzing quantitative data, the researcher used the percentage formula from a simple statistical formula as follow:

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100\%$$

*P*: Percentage Number

*f*: Frequency being searched

*N*: Number of cases (Sudijono 1996)

The results of these calculations were interpreted into the effectiveness level criteria as follows:

- a. Very Effective : 80% - 100%
- b. Effective : 60% - 79%
- c. Quite Effective : 40% - 59%
- d. Less Effective : <40%

The level of effectiveness is determined based on Mulyasa's statement (2004) that in terms of results, learning is categorized to be successful if there is a positive change in behavior in all or at least most of the students (75%).

## 3. Results and Discussion

This research should have been carried out normally with learning activities in the experimental class and control class. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the research was conducted in a limited way by following the rules of the health protocol. The research activities were carried out in a training format that lasts for two days, on Saturday and Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> - 10<sup>th</sup> October 2021. Participants who took part in this research activity are 20 Muda Praja (the first level of IPDN's students) from various study programs. It took place at the Rudini Hall of IPDN.

### 3.1 Process Analysis

As mentioned earlier, experiential learning can be defined as an action to achieve something based on experience that is continuously changing in order to improve the effectiveness of the learning outcomes themselves. The purpose of this model is to influence learners in three ways, namely 1) changing students' cognitive structure; 2) changing student attitudes; and 3) improving students' existing skills.

The three elements are interconnected and affect as a whole, means that if one element is missing, then the other two elements will not be effective. This experiential learning model emphasizes that all learners can learn from their experiences.

Kolb in Baharudin and Wahyuni (2007) argues that the experiential learning model is a model of teaching and learning process that activates learning to build knowledge and skills through direct experience. In addition, Rahardjo (2018) explains in detail about the stages in experiential learning as follows.

a. Concrete Experience

This stage is the earliest stage, where a person experiences an event as it really is (only feels, sees, and retells the event). In this stage a person does not yet have an awareness of the nature of the event, what really happened, and why it happened.

In this study, all participants were directed to listen to explanations and see examples on how to introduce themselves effectively or professionally in new situations. Participants were invited to feel, see, and retell the events of introducing themselves effectively.

b. Reflective Observation

At this stage, there is already an observation of the events experienced, looking for answers, carrying out reflections, and developing questions on how events occurred and why they happened.

In the study, the participants were invited to ask questions about things that were not quite clear. They could ask many questions until they were able to understand the event.

c. Abstract Conceptualization

At this stage, someone has tried to make an abstraction, develop a theory, concept, procedure about something being the object of attention.

In this study, all participants were invited to imagine themselves developing concepts and procedures for introducing themselves effectively.

d. Active Experimentation

In this final stage, there have been attempts to actively experiment and to apply both concepts and theories into real situations.

In this study, each participant paired up, actively engage, and applied concepts and procedures for introducing themselves effectively to each other, so that they gained active experience.

Effective learning appears when a person develops in a cycle consisting of four stages. He or she has real experiences followed by observations and reflections that lead to formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalization (conclusions) which are then used to test hypotheses in the future situation to generate new experiences.

### 3.2 Data Analysis

The description of the analyzed data is on five aspects of self-development. The five aspects that need to be improved are: 1) self-confidence; 2) effective communication; 3) human relations; 4) leadership; and 5) handling stress.

Those five aspects are described in fifteen questionnaire questions given to all the participants as pre-test and post-test. As pre-test, the questionnaire means the desires, hopes, and something to be achieved, while as post-test, it means the fulfillment of those hopes, desires, and something to be achieved. The results of the pre-test and the post-test are described in the following table.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Summary

No.	Aspect	Pre-test	Post-test
1.	<i>Self Confidence</i>	14 = 70%	20 = 100%
2.	<i>Effective Communication</i>	15 = 87,5%	20 = 100%
3.	<i>Human Relations</i>	11 = 55%	20 = 100%
4.	<i>Leadership</i>		100%
5.	<i>Handling Stress</i>		100%

a. Improving Self-Confidence

Confidence play an important role for those who will perform in front of many people or public. For instance, a prospective leader needs to have sufficient self-confidence when delivering speech or leading a meeting. With a good self-confidence, the meeting can take place in a calm, comfortable, fun, and interesting way. In contrast, someone with lack of confidence will make the atmosphere of the meeting flat, stiff, uncomfortable, and even boring. A person's self-confidence can be seen in the effort of good self-preparation, elegant appearance, mental stability, and the material mastery.

Hooper (1995) once said, "You are what you think". It means that whatever is in our mind can become reality. If we think we can't, then we will be incapable. On the other hand, if we think we can do it, so can we. You are what you think!

Confidence begins with knowing yourself first, followed by accepting yourself as you are. After accepting ourselves as we are, we can realize to appreciate ourselves with the achievements and successes. From this achievement and success comes the awareness to believe in ourselves. Furthermore, if people are confident, they can lead themselves to be what they want to be. If described, the process of self-confidence is as follows.

### **Know Yourself → Accept Yourself → Respect Yourself → Confident → Lead Yourself**

In Table 1, the aspect of Self Confidence is 14 or 70% before training, and 20 or 100% after the activity. The number of participants who took part in the training activities is 20 Praja. This means that before participating in the training, 14 Praja or 70% of the participants really wanted to understand and could have self-confidence competence. Meanwhile, 30% of them were still interested, but not as much as the enthusiasm of 70% of the participants. After participating in the training activities, all participants, 20 people or 100% stated that they had the understanding and confidence skills.

The form of activity or training to improve self-confidence was through activities or games in the form of introducing themselves to each other. At first, the two participants introduced themselves in turns. One introduced himself, the other listened. This was done alternately. Then, the activity was continued with each participant appearing in front of the public (all participants), to introduce themselves. This was to improve the courage and confidence to speak in public.

In addition to introducing themselves, to improve their self-confidence, the participants were also given activities to pair up with each other, two by two. They hold a blank sheet of paper, which then folding into four parts. The first part contained about one's own strengths, the second part or fold was about the strengths of the partner. The third part contained about one's own weaknesses, and the fourth part was about the partner's weaknesses. Furthermore, the results of these observations were mutually confirmed to their partners. Thus, there will be an understanding to know each other's strengths and weaknesses. It is important to be able to accept reality, which can increase self-confidence.

#### **Improving Effective Communication**

Communication is simply defined as the process of delivering messages or information from one person (the communicator) to another (the communicant/audience) through various means. The purpose of communication is to inform, influence, and convince. Communication is said to be effective if people succeed in conveying messages, understood by the recipient, and can actually be implemented, to create two-way interaction.

Communication requires one's willingness and ability to see the world from another's point of view, because meaning does not lie in words but lies in humans, and humans are different from one another. Therefore, in communicating we need to understand the principles, namely:

- 1) clear, concise, and understandable
- 2) two way, action, reaction
- 3) effective media selection
- 4) if needed, do it repeatedly
- 5) feedback is very important

Communication carrying out in life should be effective communication. According to Neno (2016), communication hits because what the sender conveys is well understood by the recipient and the feedback given by the recipient matches the sender's main intention. Therefore, the most important principle in effective communication is what is heard, not what is said. Actually, the most important thing from the sender is the statement, and from the receiver is the perception of the statement. If the statement has been delivered but the receiver's perception is limping then the result is that the feedback is not as expected. This means that communication does not hit.

The most appropriate medium for establishing communication between two or more parties is language. The form of language is a statement. The statement must be an arrangement of words that are short, meaningful, and clear in meaning. That statement should not be long-winded. Because the statement is a measure to observe the depth of a person's way of thinking, the idea as a driver must be arranged chronologically and systematically. If the expression is conveyed in stages with a clear core of expression in each stage, it is likely that it will be easier for the recipient to quickly grasp the essence of the message and provide appropriate feedback. Without proper communication, it is likely that the conveyed message will be hampered.

The main requirement for establishing effective communication is listening. There is a difference between hearing and listening. Hearing can mean casually listening. On the contrary, listening has a serious meaning in listening. Listening or comprehending also involves the whole self. The self that hears merges with what is heard. The fused self means that thoughts, feelings and willingness are involved in the listening activity.

As shown in Table 1, the Communication Aspect scores 15 or 87.5% before the training activity begins and 20 or 100% after the training ends. This means that most of the participants have a great desire to acquire effective communicative competence. After receiving treatment, all participants stated that they had the effective communicative competence.

In the activity, the communication practices that are carried out are getting to know each other, telling stories and expressing ideas/opinion to each other during playing the games such as "make the rope as long as possible", the "complicated" game, and the "selling" game.

#### b. Developing Human Relations

Fostering human relations is necessary for every human being to have more friends. Many people who have successfully built their businesses and their lives have studied and practiced the key success in building relationship with other people. There are records and reports about successful people who has also apply the principles of building relationship with other people. Others like them; in the same manner, they also liked other people.

Schwartz (1999), reports in his famous book, “Think and Think Big”, that the most influential senator since World War II, the Presidents of the United States from 1963 to 1969, Lyndon B. Johnson has a list of principles and rules for relationships with other people. The list of rules was practiced in his daily life. Dale Carnegie has used the ten lists of rules in his trainings since 1972. Later, he wrote the rules in a book that became a bestseller, “How to Win Friends and Influence Others”. Many people admit that the basic principles of building relationships between people have been a miracle because they were able to turn their lives into success.

How are the principles of life that make our lives successful both as entrepreneurs and as humans in general? There are nine principles for building relationships between people, twelve principles for building genuine and enthusiastic cooperation, and nine principles for leadership, which are still one of the main materials for Carnegian trainings. Those main materials becomes the strength for almost all of the training materials packaged by the successor to Dale Carnegie’s ideals.

This study leads to the realization of these Carnegian trainings; thereby improvement is not only in human relations, but also in self-development, which creates excellence in human resources. This study is in line with the “Nawa Cita” or “mental revolution” which is often campaigned by the 7<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo.

In Table 1, the aspect of Human Relations, initially, scored 11 or 55% of participants who did not understand and had a great desire to have interpersonal relations competence. After receiving treatment with training activities, all the participants stated that they had obtained competence in the human relations.

Activities that support the improvement of interpersonal relationship in this study were expressed by getting to know each other, revealing each other’s strengths and weaknesses, making ropes as long as possible, as well as playing role as a salesperson in very limited time and conditions.

#### c. Improving Leadership

Good leadership is a skill to motivate and inspire other people so that they can optimally grow and develop. Yeung (2001), in *Coaching People*, explicitly says that empower and inspire others to achieve their desires not ours. Although it is true that some people are born with extraordinary talent, leadership skills are actually a set of skills, almost all of which can be learnt and improved. However, the process does not happen overnight.

There are a number of definitions of leadership from various literatures. According to Stoner and Freeman (1992) leadership is the process of directing and influencing work-related activities of group members. Additionally, Bartol and Martin (1991) state that leadership is a process of influencing others about achievement towards organizational goals.

The definition of leadership in a broader term put forwarded by Yukl (2005). He stated that leadership includes the process of influencing in determining organizational goals, motivating follower behavior to achieve goals, influencing to improve the group and its culture.

Some definitions mentioned above have three important implications: 1) leadership involves other people, both subordinates and followers; 2) leadership involves a balanced distribution of power between the leader and group members because group members are not powerless; and 3) the ability to use different forms of power to influence the adherents’ behavior in various ways.

The leadership concept closely relates to the concept of power. By having power, leaders can get tools to influence the behavior of their adherents. There are several power sources and forms: coercive power, legitimacy, expertise, respect, relevance, information, and relationship (Thoha 2015). Power is the ability to influence people or certain group to achieve certain goals. In this case, power is nothing but the ability to persuade others to do what those in power want them to do.

The effectiveness of leadership is determined by a joint result between the person who becomes the leader and the person they lead. Leadership will not be effective if there is no participation from subordinates. Evaluating the effectiveness is often associated with the consequences and actions from the leader to his followers and other stakeholders.

In Table 1, the Leadership aspects gets 20 or 100% points. This can be interpreted that all the participants were very eager to have leadership competence. At the end of the training, all the participants stated that they had acquired leadership competence through various activities during presentation, training process and playing games.

The activities that can improve leadership competence in this training were dance together games in “follow the leader”, solving the “complexity” game by making a circle by holding hands, making a rope as long as possible with items on the body, and the game of “selling” items with certain price in a limited time. All of the

games was packaged in such a way from various observations and experiences of the participants were very helpful in improving leadership competence.

d. Improving Handling Stress Management

Stress simply refers to a condition in which a person feels pressured and threatened. The term “stress” has evolved in its meaning, and is used to denote the presence of pressure, tension, or exertion aimed at the human mental powers. According to Lazarus & Folkman (1984), stress does not only depend on external conditions, but also on individual vulnerability and cognitive processing mechanisms. Stress also occurs when there is a gap between the demands and the ability for fulfilling those demands.

Everyone has a different way of dealing with unpleasant situation or psychological imbalance within himself or herself. People will try to restore their psychological state to balance or equilibrium. A person’s efforts to deal with stress called as Stress Management Strategies. These are continuous efforts to change cognitive and behavior to cope with external and internal demands considering burdensome or exceed the available resources.

There are two strategies for dealing with stress. First, countermeasures directed at problems causing stress. Second, countermeasures directed at regulating emotional responses to problem causing stress. Another effort to deal with stress is to change study or work habits; helping a person adjust to feeling caused by stress; maintaining health, training programs and positive thinking.

In Table 1, Handling Stress management gets the same point as Leadership, i.e. 20. It can be interpreted that all the participants had great desire to have competence in handling stress. Initially, they did not understand how to manage stress. However, at the end of the training, participants stated that they were able to handle stress they faced. It was proven by the appearance of participants’ behavior before and after participating in the training activities. At first, they were still awkward, afraid, worried, and unfriendly. On the contrary, after the training ended, they were more relaxed, their faces lit up, and had wider smile.

Various self-competence improvement activities packaged in games or activities are described in the following table.

Table 2. Games/Activities for Self-competence Improvement

Aspect	Games/Activities
<b>Self-Confidence</b>	Introducing Yourself, Follow the Leader Game, Selling Game
<b>Effective Communication</b>	Introducing Yourself, Rope Game, Stick Game, Complicated Game, Selling Game
<b>Human Relations</b>	Introducing Yourself, Balloon Game, Stick Game, Selling Game
<b>Leadership</b>	Follow the Leader Game, Complicated Game, Selling Game, Rope Game, Performance Test
<b>Handling Stress</b>	Follow the Leader Game, Balloon Game, Rope Game, Stick Game, Relaxation

The observation results from two independent observers implied that:

- Participants played a very active role in gaining improved knowledge and skills in the training.
- The training was very suitable for improving the performance of the participants.
- The material used in the training was very suitable for broadening the participants’ insight and knowledge.
- The instructor was very qualified.
- The tools used in the training place were inadequate.

From the observation results above, it could be assumed that even though the training room facilities, equipment and training atmosphere were very inadequate, the essence of the training and its achievements had not diminished. It also could be inferred that if there were more adequate training facilities (such as audio equipment sets and multimedia projector), the results certainly would be more impressive.

One of the participants interviewed after the training, expressed his gratitude for being lucky to be able to take part in the training. Moreover, he also claimed that there was valuable improvement in his personality.

**4. Conclusion**

Based on the training results, it can be concluded that experiential learning is very effective to be applied in self-development program to improve excellence resource of IPDN Praja. It is also recommended that the self-development training program should be carried out more professionally in terms of providing conducive room and adequate training equipment so that the results become more optimal. Considering the results are very good, it is suggested that the self-development program through experiential learning can become one of the program in the *jar-lat-suh* (learning, training, nurturing) pattern, particularly in the nurturing aspect for excellence in the quality of Praja resources.

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