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Experiential Learning Implementation in Rice Agriculture Education Program at Imah Urang Educational Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Karawang, an agrarian area located in West Java, has recently experienced a rapid industrial transformation that has led to a breakdown in intergenerational transmission of local farming knowledge and ecological values. As a response to this situation, Imah Urang Educational Tourism implemented a rice agriculture education program situated in outdoor learning experiences that uses Kolb's (2015) Experiential Learning framework. The aim of the current study is to describe the experiential learning that occurs in the program, and examine how each phase of the cycle (Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation) informs development of agrarian, ecological and cultural values. Data were collected using a descriptive qualitative method where observation, interviews with key stakeholders and documentation provided the basis of analysis of findings. The findings demonstrated that the program successfully encouraged participation in experiential activities and evoked empathy for farmers and ecological thinking, as well as valuing culture. The study concludes that non-formal educational tourism that uses an experiential educational approach in agrarian areas impacted by industry can act as a practical educational model for sustainability learning.

1. Introduction

Karawang Regency is also known as one of the "lambung padi" as it has the largest rice fields in both Java and Indonesia. The average production of rice fields reaches 865.000 tons of rice per year (Disperta Karawang, 2015). However, within two decades, agricultural identity faced challenges due to massive and continuous conversion of agricultural land (Ashri & Triwibowo, 2025). The rapidly increasing rate of agricultural land conversion in Karawang for the non-agricultural sector is deeply concerning. Data from Dinas Pertanian Karawang (Agriculture Office Karawang) indicates that between 1989 and 2017 a land area of 2,578 hectares was converted into residential and industrial zone. The rate of land loss reached 180 hectares per year by 2011 (Raka, 2022). This transformation has been driven by macro factors such as the development of large-scale infrastructure projects like toll

roads, Commuter rail, and industrial estate expansion, which enhance access between Karawang and major metropolitan centers like Jakarta and Bandung. Consequently, the economic value generated by the non-agricultural sector is significantly higher than the agricultural sector, shifting community livelihoods and gradually eroding traditional agrarian orientations.

The conversion of farmland not only reshapes the physical landscape, but also disrupts socio-cultural structure. The drastic reduction of farmer land severely impacts the local community's social culture, economy, and the passing down of agrarian values. As agricultural income decrease, younger generations increasingly turn to non-agricultural occupations perceived as more stable and prestigious (Wijayanti et al., 2024). Previous research highlights that such trends lead to discontinuity in farmer regeneration and loss of ecological knowledge once embedded in agrarian communities (Putri, 2025). The diminishing familiarity with farming practices poses a serious threat to the sustainability of agrarian culture and identity in Karawang.

Although numerous studies have analyzed land-use change from spatial, economic, and policy perspectives (Noviyanti & Sutrisno, 2021). However, limited studies have explored educational interventions capable of revitalizing agrarian awareness and values among younger generations. In this regard, Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (2015) provides a relevant pedagogical framework. The theory emphasizes that learning occurs through a cyclical process of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. This learning enables learners to develop both cognitive understanding and emotional connection with their environment. Applied to agricultural education, this model can help reintroduce ecological values and local wisdom through direct, hands-on experience. This paper tries to bridge such research by investigating the significance of Imah Urang educational tourism as an intervention approach.

The Imah Urang rice agriculture education program in Karawang applies the experiential learning approach by inviting participants of all ages such as children, youth, adults, and families to experience firsthand the rice cultivation process. Participants engage in activities such as soil preparation, planting, maintaining, and harvesting, followed by reflective discussions that explore the meaning of farmers' dedication, food security, and sustainable living. Through this process, the program becomes a participatory educational model that allows diverse age groups to rediscover agrarian values through direct experience. This approach aligns with findings by Prastowo (2018, as cited in Irawan et al., 2025), who emphasized the importance of local wisdom-based experiential learning in developing ecological awareness, empathy, and social responsibility.

By positioning agriculture as a shared and experiential learning process, Imah Urang contributes not only to environmental education but also to cultural preservation and sustainable practice. However, despite the growing urgency to construct experiential-based educational models in the context of land-use transformation, research on the implementation of experiential learning in rice agriculture education programs remains limited.

Based on the background, this study aims to describe the implementation of experiential learning in the rice agriculture education program at Imah Urang Educational Tourism. The research seeks to analyze how experiential learning components are designed and applied in practice. The findings are expected to provide insights into how non-formal, experience-based education can serve as a model for strengthening ecological literacy and cultural resilience in industrialized agrarian communities.

2. Methodology

This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at observing and describing in depth how the Experiential Learning (EL) model is implemented in an agricultural-based educational program. The study focuses on the Imah Urang Eco Park in Karawang, which serves as the main research site and represents an educational tourism initiative integrating experiential learning principles. Although activities in Rice Agriculture Education Program designed for early childhood and elementary-level learners, the program is also accessible to participants of various ages, including youth, adults, and families, making it a model of intergenerational learning.

The study took place at Imah Urang Eco Park in Karawang Regency, West Java. The location was purposefully chosen for the experience of listeners, as Imah Urang Eco Park explores methodologies for experiential learning environments in agricultural education and outdoor education. Participants were purposefully selected using a purposive sampling procedure, and included five overarching classifications of informants, specifically program management, facilitators, teachers, government representatives, and experts from the Asosiasi Experiential Learning Indonesia (AELI). The multiplicity of stakeholder participants aimed to gain the fullest picture possible of the program design and implementation.

Research Instruments

The main instrument in this research is the Researcher, who acts as the data collector, analyst, and reporter. Supporting instruments include a semi-structured Interview Protocol, an Observation Sheet specifically designed to record the four stages of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Concrete Experience/CE, Reflective Observation/RO, Abstract Conceptualization/AC, and Active Experimentation/AE), and a Documentation Checklist. Key documentation data referenced include internal documents such as the Educational Program Presentation (2024) detailing the program materials.

Data Collection

Informant sampling was conducted using Purposive Sampling to select key parties with deep knowledge of the research subject. The main data collection techniques were In-depth Interviews and Non-Active Participant Observation. Data collection took place between June and July 2025, the observation was focused on the Rice

Agriculture program. A breakdown of the informant categories is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Summary of Informants

Category of Informants	Description
Management Facilitators	Responsible for designing and developing the Rice Agriculture program Act as field implementers who guide participants during activities at each learning post.
Teachers	Function as observers accompanying students or participants from educational institutions.
Government	Provide policy perspective and institutional support for educational tourism integration.
EL Expert (AELI)	Acts as academic consultant ensuring the application of Kolb's Experiential Learning cycle.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using the Miles and Huberman Model (Miles et al., 2014), performed cyclically: Data Reduction (selecting relevant data), Data Display (primarily through the EL cycle matrix for flow visualization), and Conclusion Drawing. To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data, the Source Triangulation technique was used, comparing and testing information obtained from different informants (Management, Facilitators, and Teachers), the results of which have been summarized in the Source Triangulation file. This technique is crucial for generating credible and accountable findings.

3. Results and Discussion

Overview of the Implementation of the Rice Agriculture Education Program at Imah Urang

Imah Urang's Rice Agriculture Education Program is one of the best agricultural-based programs that teaches people of all ages. In this context, agricultural education activities are not only considered a form of recreation but also a method to rejuvenate agrarian values and maintain the local identity of the Karawang community. This activity makes participants active learners. Participants are invited to learn about the whole process of rice farming through a series of activities based on Experiential Learning. In general, the activities are split into three main posts. An overview of these three posts is provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Activities in Three Post Rice Agriculture

Post	Activities
Post 1	Introduction to the history and culture of rice, and experimentation with selecting "super seeds."
Post 2	Introduction to pests and the practice of soil cultivation and rice planting.
Post 3	Practice of harvesting, reflection on the meaning of farm work, and post-harvest activities.

This activity structure is intentionally arranged to align with the sequence of the Experiential Learning Cycle (Kolb, 2015) which includes Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE). Each post is not separate; they all work together to make a complete learning cycle. The program specifically uses a story-based (Thomas, 2019) and hands-on approach as its primary pedagogical framework. In the initial stage, the facilitator assumes a crucial dual role as a storyteller and a guide, tasked with building emotional context while simultaneously directing the activities. Conversely, participants are encouraged to be active through direct experience, experimenting with new things, and critically reflecting on every lesson they acquire. This holistic facilitation method effectively triggers and supports a comprehensive learning process, engaging the cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions.

Implementation Experiential Learning Based on Four Stages Kolb

A. Concrete Experience (CE)

It was clear that the Concrete Experience stage of the program was happening because there were a lot of direct, hands-on activities in the field. Participants did not just listen to theory; they were involved in the whole process of *Nandur* (planting), from preparing the soil to choosing the seeds and planting them to harvesting them. These activities created a multisensory experience for the participants, who could feel the soil's texture, smell the mud, and feel the rhythm of planting rice with their own hands.

Beginning at Post 1, the activity began by exploring the story of rice, from its original cultivation in China, which spread to Taiwan and the Nusantara, to becoming Indonesia's staple food crop. The facilitator connected that information to the narrative of Dewi Sri, the goddess of fertility, in the Sundanese and West Javanese story. The entire narrative allowed participants to become aware of the value of agriculture. Agriculture acts economically and spiritually and culturally. Storytelling increase attention of participants and made it more easier to remember and connecting after program (Hughes et al., 2022).

After the narrative was finished, the facilitator had the participants participate in an experiment to determine "super seeds". The facilitator asked participants to combine water and salt and added a raw egg to observe buoyancy. Then they added rice (unhusked rice) to the saltwater to exercise quality's seed grain, sinking was a super seed, and floating was an inferior crack of grain. This simple experiment created a scientifically curious atmosphere but also build esteem for the meticulous seed selection work that farmers do. Experiments gain meaning, as noted by Fink (2013)

The first stage in the Kolb (2015) learning cycle was an embodiment of the Concrete Experience characteristics, regaining full engagement in a new experience through direct engagement with the object of the learning. In the case of this stage, participants experienced "learning through doing," where the experience was the main source of knowledge. Both objectives modeled the notion of "embodied

learning,” in the Kolb theory participants were using their body and their senses as the main source of learning. Methods such as touching the dirt and planting rice enhanced the emotional connections to the agricultural process.

Beyond just providing concrete experiences, the activities conducted at Post 1 offered a preliminary emotional and reflective component. When the facilitator asked questions such as “Did any of your parents or grandparents ever farm?”, “Why, in your opinion, are they no longer interested in becoming farmers?” or “Why is agricultural land disappearing or decreasing in our area?” and so forth, they were encouraging participants to reflect on their connection to their own agrarian heritage. Responding to questions like these, many participants indicated parents working in trades related to the industrial sector rather than on the paddies, which suggests a generational shift and remains an early stage of social reflection beyond an individual perspective. The activity supported a natural movement to the second stage in Kolb’s cycle and engaged in Reflective Observation.

Moving to post 2, participants invited to direct experiences *Nandur* (planting). This stage, is an multisensory experience while participants barefoot in mud. They hearing, smell, feel, and taste establishing a direct physical connection to the earth element, an interaction Suryaratri et al (2019) confirm as highly beneficial to experiential learning. This CE experiences, which is learning by doing become foundation for participants understanding and reflective observation regarding the importance of “Ibu Pertiwi” (Mother Earth).

Next in post 3, The rice threshing process becomes the climax of entire cultivation experience. The CE now focuses on the harvest results. While participants do not just observe, but their perform themselves to harvesting. the participants harvested rice using locally peasant tools called sickle (*arit*) and a small palm knife (*ani-ani*). The facilitator described the two traditional harvesting practices found in West Java: *diarit* (harvesting the whole clump of rice) and *dietem* (harvesting each stalk of rice with ani-ani.) After harvesting, participants were instructed on how to perform *gebot* (threshing the rice through a hitting action to separate grain) and storing the harvest in the *leuit* (the traditional rice barn.) This provided a unique opportunity to experience the palpable connection between farmers' labor, processing methods, and traditional storage techniques.

B. The Reflective Observation (RO)

The Reflective Observation (RO) stage consistently emerged at every transition point between activity posts. Upon completing the Concrete Experience at Post 1, the facilitator engaged participants in a guided reflection session. The facilitator utilized open-ended and probing questions to trigger critical consciousness and encourage a retrospective look at the experience, including:

1. “Did any of your parents or grandparents ever farm?”
 2. “Why, in your opinion, are they no longer interested in becoming farmers?”
 3. “Why is agricultural land disappearing or decreasing in our area?”
-

Through this supported reflection, participants identified the discrepancy between their initial understanding of farm work (often naive), and the complex, exigent practices they witnessed in the field, which requires immense perseverance, planning complexity, and skilled practice. This reflective activity created a new awareness relating to the "invisible work" of staple food production. For adult participants, the reflective experience resulted in empathy and an increased level of respect for the work put into food security. However, for children, the experience shifted them towards a growing sense of awe for nature and a greater responsibility for the environment. This is wholly aligned with Kolb's (2015) position on reflective learning and the importance of processing and reflecting on an experience before new, abstract ideas can be generated.

Furthermore, beyond individual reflection, the activities were designed as a way to promote social reflection (shared reflection). Participants reflected on rapid social change in Karawang to discuss why, they had observed, the younger generation does not wish to farm, and how industrialization has aggressively reduced agricultural values. The facilitator reaffirmed the lesson of the program; an in-depth understanding of agriculture is more than just the technical tasks of growing and harvesting food, but a matter of ecological and social responsibility.

In Post 2, when participants trying *Nandur* (planting) and interacted with mud, the RO process occurred while they were given an explanation about 'Ibu Pertiwi' (Mother Earth) in mud. This engagement connects participants with the "real world," which is often more reflective of their own reality and cultural identity, which can be particularly important for students from other cultures (Fullan et al., 2018). Moving to Post 3 participants were invited to perform *Digedeng* (make rice ties) and put in to *Leuit* (granary). This process triggered a reflective observation on the importance of local wisdom in handling the harvest and managing food stocks, complementing their earlier reflection on the physical effort of harvesting. This deep reflective engagement successfully marked the smooth transition into the third stage of Kolb's model, Abstract Conceptualization.

C. The Abstract Conceptualization (AC)

The stage of Abstract Conceptualization (AC) functioned as a significant bridge between participants' field experiences and conceptual interpretations. Within the context of the Rice Agriculture Education Program, this was noted in the process of where participants were guided to connect their concrete experience in the rice paddy fields to theory and knowledge of culture and ecology. After they had moved through direct experience and focused reflection, the facilitator assisted participants in developing conceptual understanding about cultural narratives and science concerning agriculture. In Post 1, participants did not only hear the story of the history of rice, they were also prompted to engage with the interconnections of the journey of the rice plant regarding migration history and cultural encounter throughout Asia. This supports the notion of awareness that food, agriculture and civilization are connected.

Apart from only the historical aspect, the facilitator introduced the local context of culture through the narrative of Dewi Sri who represents fertility, prosperity, and harmony with nature. Participants learned that traditional forms of farming were not only based upon technical knowledge, but spiritual knowledge as well. For example, participants learned that the farmer rituals around planting, harvesting, and storing rice into a leuit (traditional rice barn) reflects meanings about gratitude and work within and harmony with nature.

By using this method, participants built the understanding that agriculture is more than simply an economic activity; it encompasses an ecosystem of values that play out in the relationships between people, nature, and culture. This process illustrates concept transformation, whereby experiences in reality are transformed into abstract concepts that can be recognized and understood. Which aligns with the ELVIS elements (Experiential Learning Variables & Indicators System) used in Designing Transformative Experiences (McLain, 2023).

The facilitator further shared concepts of food security, and sustainable agriculture, and participants were able to talk about how land use change along with the loss of agricultural land, affects the nation's ability to meet its own food needs independently. As a result, students began to understand agriculture not only from a technical perspective, but also from ecological, economic, and social perspectives. In adult participants, this stage initiated more critical reflective consciousness. They started to theorize about agriculture as a national resilience system rather than simply a traditional inheritance. Children were able to process these concepts more simplistically through games and Q&A demonstrated the significance of protection of the land and food valuing.

In Post 2, the AC stage materialized when participants, following the physical experience of *Nandur* and reflection on Ibu Pertiwi, were given conceptual explanations about insect/pests who become threat of rice. They learned to categorize pests (birds, planthoppers, rats, snails, stem borers) and, most importantly know how to pests prevention. Become theoretical framework to explaining why certain planting practices are crucial, such as maintaining plants density and cleanliness to reduce pest vulnerability (Loka et al., 2022).

Furthermore, in Post 3, after participants experienced harvesting with the *arit* and *ani-ani*, the AC stage occurred when the facilitator conceptualized the two traditional harvesting practices in west java: *diarit* and *dietem*. They learned post harvest methods (*gebot* vs *gedeng*). This whole process is representative of the learning spiral as proposed in Kolb's (2015) theory in which learning continues with experience and reflection, albeit at a more complex level. In this sense, Imah Urang served as an "in-between space" to allow the bridging of experience and ecological and cultural awareness.

D. The Active Experimentation (AE)

The concluding component in the Experiential Learning cycle is Active Experimentation (AE), which indicates that participants are acting on the outcome

of their conceptualizing. As indicated in the Rice Agriculture Education Program, this was done by harvesting and emphasizing sustainability in practice.

In Post 1, AE occurred immediately after participants completed the AC regarding super seeds. Participants were required to immediately test the theory they had acquired. In post 2, AE took a physical and technical form. Participants were instructed to perform land leveling and land marking in mud. This action constituted an AE that simultaneously engaged the participants sensory-motoric. At Post 3, In addition to harvesting being a physical act, it also has meaning. The facilitator articulated the philosophy of the *leuit* as a representation of independence and prosperity in food production. Participants understood the harvest was not simply storage as a logistical matter, but a form of respect to our food and to nature.

In the final component of the program, participants were invited to reflect again, this time while enjoying a group lunch. As they enjoyed their meal together, participants identified their own impressions, any lessons learned, and feelings that emerged during the experience. Several participants noted a greater appreciation for rice and a commitment to reducing food waste. Young participants expressed wanting to invite their friends to come see the paddy field. This illustrates that the Active Experimentation stage included practical applications, but also lasting impacts on attitude, empathy and behavior change (Chan et al., 2021).

The program also included a follow-up activity as a challenge to the participants: to replant the seeds they harvested, at home. Participants were asked to note whether any of the seeded plants fell into the category of "super seeds". This activity, while simple, helped bridge the experience at a recreational site with the home environment, thus, extending the educational experience to promote a sense of ongoing, contextual learning.

Within the framework of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (Purnamasari & Hanifah, 2021), this stage holds significant value. Participants not only acquired knowledge but also the skills and awareness to act responsibly towards the environment. Thus, Imah Urang serves not merely as a learning site but as a social laboratory where citizens relearn how to live in harmony with nature. Table 3 below provides a detailed summary of how the four stages of the Kolb cycle were implemented in each Post of the field activities:

Table 3. Implementation Experiential Learning Based on Four Stages Kolb

Post	CE	RO	AC	AE
Post 1	Storytelling of history and cultural of seeds in Asia and Nusantara	Open Question about family profession and asking opinion why the land landscape of farming decrease	Internalize value of history and culture	Experimental super seed between salt and water as an indicator
Post 2	<i>Nandur</i> (planting)	Explanation about <i>Ibu</i>	Explanation about insect/pest	Land leveling and land marking

Post 3	Rice threshing process	<p><i>Pertiwi</i> (Mother Earth) in mud</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Digedeng</i> (make rice ties) <p>Puit in to <i>Leuit</i> (granary)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explanation about tools of harvesting (<i>Arit</i> and <i>Etem</i>) <p>Explanation about after harvesting (<i>Gebot</i> and <i>Gedeng</i>)</p>	Harvesting process
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Internalized Values in the Learning Process

Observations and interviews with the facilitators indicate that the application of the Experiential Learning model at Imah Urang yielded a learning transformation encompassing three main dimensions: agrarian values, ecological values, and cultural values. The following table 4, summarizes the key internalized values:

Table 4. Three Key Internalized Values

Value	Description
Agrarian	Following the direct experience of planting and harvesting rice, participants expressed greater empathy for those engaged in the farming profession than they would have if they simply read the text or watched the video without the additional immersion. Participants expressed the belief that farm work is not simply a choice, but that it requires perseverance, collaboration, and sophisticated local cultural knowledge. This cultural knowledge is particularly valuable in the context of agrarian regeneration in sites like Karawang, where many youth are disengaging from farming in favor of industrial employment.
Ecological	During the process of cultivating soil and planting seedlings, participants developed a practical understanding of the interrelationship between soil condition, water, and crop yield. Experiencing the significance of irrigation and balance in an ecosystem fostered deep ecological awareness. Follow-up activities at home encouraged an extension of ecological behaviors e.g., replanting seeds or reducing food waste.
Cultural	Engagement in the Dewi Sri narrative and traditional practices, such as storage in the <i>leuit</i> (traditional rice barn), advanced participant's knowledge of agricultural cultural, social and cultural significance. Participants recognized farming as part of their Sundanese identity as agriculture often has symbolic meanings for economic stability, local pride, or of the agrarian cultural character. This generated a sense of awareness and pride in the agrarian cultural identity.

Critical Discussion and Theoretical Implications

In summary, the findings from this study show that Experiential Learning at Imah Urang created a complete and transformative learning cycle. All four stages (CE, RO, AC, AE) were intertwined, while also acting to support one another in the construction of meaning. A significant part of the program's success was its ability to transform a potentially purely recreational activity into a thoughtful and immensely meaningful educational experience (Wetering et al., 2022).

A. Theoretical Implications

relevance of Kolb's model (2015) when it comes to local wisdom-based education. The findings show that, in the context of non-formal education, experiential learning can be successfully modified to promote ecological and cultural awareness. This aligns with the ideas related to place-based education (Sobel, 2004) which highlights the paramount importance of learning from the local environment/area. An example of this would be that, during the AC stage, the incorporation of the Sundanese Dewi Sri narrative into the process was found to support abstract conceptualization in educational settings where there is a foundation in local culture.

B. Practical Implications

From a practical standpoint, this model represents a new opportunity for public schools and local stakeholders. Schools can include visits to Imah Urang as an explicit part of the thematic curriculum, allowing students to learn from communities rather than merely learn about communities. Meanwhile, local governments can leverage this effective model to enhance character education and the maintenance of agrarian culture in the context of their communities. The changes in participant attitude and behavior such as engaging in behavior that minimized food waste, suggest that the model is effective in mobilizing responsible citizenship for various Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) goals.

4. Conclusion

The use of Experiential Learning (EL) in the Rice Agriculture Education Program at Imah Urang shows how powerful experience-based education can be in raising awareness of farming and the environment among students of all ages. The program uses the whole EL cycle (concrete experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation) to turn hands-on farming activities into valuable learning experiences. Learners gain direct experience with the processes, challenges, and cultural importance of agriculture through activities like planting, harvesting, and traditional rice farming practices. This connects what they learn in the classroom with what they do in real life. The design of EL components at Imah Urang carefully combines ecological principles, cultural heritage, and participatory learning to make sure that each activity helps kids learn new skills and develop their values. Experiential education has a big effect on students because it helps them develop empathy, responsibility, and a sense of sustainability. Also, in places like Karawang, which are industrialized and have a lot of land being turned into cities and modernized, the program shows how non-formal, experience-based education can teach people how to be culturally resilient and ecologically literate.

This method helps individual students and also provides a framework for larger community education programs that promote sustainable farming, caring for the environment, and keeping local cultural values alive. The results show that EL-based programs can be used as a model for improving ecological and cultural

awareness in industrialized agricultural settings. This supports the idea that new educational methods can be used to help communities grow. The Rice Agriculture Education Program at Imah Urang shows how experiential learning can connect education, culture, and sustainability in quickly changing farming communities. It does this by combining practice, reflection, and active engagement.

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