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Analysis of Local Natural Resource Utilization in Project Based Learning (PjBL) in Higher Education in Indonesia-Malaysia Border Regions

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A B S T R A C T

The Indonesia-Malaysia border area has diverse and beneficial local natural resource potentials, but hasn't been fully utilized in learning at universities. The purpose of this study is to analyze the utilization of local natural resources in the application of the PjBL model in state universities in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area, more precisely in West Kalimantan, namely IAIN Pontianak. The focus of the study is the utilization of local natural resources as teaching materials and project media, as well as its impact on student involvement in the learning process and learning outcomes. This study adopts a descriptive qualitative methodology, gathering data via in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation. The data analysis technique used is the technique from Miles, Huberman and Saldana with data validity through triangulation. The results of the study show that the utilization of local natural resources in PjBL can increase active student involvement, strengthen the relevance of lecture materials to real contexts, encourage the emergence of creative and innovative solutions to local potentials and problems, and foster awareness of environmental conservation among students. However, its implementation is still not optimal due to limited supporting facilities and infrastructure, uneven lecturer competence, and minimal collaboration with the local community and industry.

1. Introduction

Among the regions in Indonesia, West Kalimantan has the longest land border that directly intersects the Sarawak region, Malaysia, which stretches approximately 966 km and connects 55 villages in West Kalimantan with 32 villages in the Sarawak region (Gultom et al., 2022). This border area is included in the 3T category (underdeveloped, outermost, foremost) with difficult access and a fairly long distance to the provincial capital, Pontianak (Efendi, 2021). Although remote,

the West Kalimantan-Sarawak border has strategic significance as a gateway between countries, as well as a unique area of socio-cultural interaction. Communities on both sides of the border share close ethnic kinship ties (Malay and Dayak), so that the socio-cultural borders feel relatively "soft" (Gultom et al., 2022).

The West Kalimantan-Sarawak border area has abundant local natural resource potential, ranging from biodiversity to agricultural, fishery, and forestry products. The island of Kalimantan (Borneo) is known as one of the world's megabiodiversity hotspots. In West Kalimantan, the area of forest cover reaches ±8.39 million hectares (2019) with more than half of it having protected forest status (Yagoza & Maksum, 2024). In addition, this border area has agricultural potential (dry rice, pepper, people's rubber, etc.), inland fisheries (e.g. in the Kapuas River and lakes), and forest products (wood, rattan, and other non-wood products). These natural resources are not only important for the lives and culture of local communities, but also play a role in the cross-border economy. Studies show that more than 98% of West Kalimantan's exports are absorbed by the state of Sarawak (Gultom et al., 2022), reflecting the large dependence and flow of local natural resource commodities to Malaysia. This means that many agricultural and forestry products from West Kalimantan are important commodities in the Sarawak market. Optimization and sustainability in the use of local natural resources are important factors in efforts to improve the standard of living of people in border areas while maintaining the sustainability of the Borneo environment.

Despite its rich natural resources, the Indonesia-Malaysia border area in West Kalimantan faces various problems in its management. Ecologically, plantation expansion and forest exploitation have triggered significant deforestation – peaking around 2016 as the expansion of oil palm plantations and uncontrolled deforestation and shifting cultivation practices have increased the risk of forest/land fires every dry season (Yagoza & Maksum, 2024). In addition, various illegal activities are rampant, ranging from illegal logging, smuggling of forest and wildlife products, to the black market trade in fish, fuel, wood, and sand across the border, which is also exacerbated by limited infrastructure, minimal human resources, and overlapping authority to manage border areas (Gultom et al., 2022). This has resulted in the suboptimal management and utilization of local natural resources sustainably to support community welfare; coupled with environmental conditions that are vulnerable to damage and many natural resource products leaving the region without providing local added value.

In order to maintain the wealth and sustainability of this nature, universities have a very strategic role. Project-based learning involving local wisdom needs to be optimized in universities in the area to support this role. The implementation of Project Based Learning (PjBL) using local wisdom can provide an effective improvement in students' learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and attitudes (Annafi & Agustina, 2018). If PjBL is associated with the utilization of local natural resources, learning becomes more meaningful because students directly interact with problems or potential in their area. For example, the implementation of the PjBL model based on local wisdom or culture has been proven to be effective in

improving students' critical thinking skills (Susanto et al., 2021). This indicates that raising the local context in a project can deepen students' understanding and skills.

PjBL is a pedagogical approach that encourages students to work actively in completing projects that are relevant to real life. In the context of border areas, PjBL can integrate local natural resources as teaching materials as well as student research objects, so that learning becomes more meaningful and contextual (Usman et al., 2023) (Damayanti et al., 2024). This approach has also been shown to improve critical thinking skills which are 21st century skills (Susanto et al., 2021), problem solving (Usman et al., 2023), collaboration, and creativity (Damayanti et al., 2024).

Furthermore, the implementation of PjBL based on local natural resources not only has a positive impact on the student learning process but also contributes to the empowerment of the community around the campus. When students raise project themes related to local potential, such as agricultural processing, herbal product development, or environmental conservation, there is synergy between the campus and the community. This makes the educational process inseparable from the local social and cultural context (Mulyono, 2023). Collaboration like this can increase students' concern for community problems and open up opportunities for sustainable innovation based on local natural resources.

In addition, the integration of PjBL with local potential also supports the direction of government policy in strengthening character-based education, local wisdom, and sustainable development. The Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology has encouraged the implementation of Merdeka Belajar–Kampus Merdeka (MBKM), one of the pillars of which is to provide space for students to study outside the campus and complete projects in the community (Direktorat Jenderal Pendidikan Tinggi, Riset, dan teknologi, 2024). In this context, PJBL that utilizes local natural resources is very much in line with the spirit of MBKM, because it encourages students to not only understand the theory, but also apply it in real terms in the field, especially in areas with high local potential but not yet optimally developed such as on the Indonesia-Malaysia border.

Based on the explanation above, it is clear that linking the utilization of local natural resources with Project Based Learning in border area universities has a dual strategic value. From an academic perspective, this improves the quality and relevance of learning through student involvement in real projects based on local potential and problems. From a societal perspective, this approach fosters environmental awareness and socio-economic empowerment, which are greatly needed in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area.

This means that IAIN Pontianak, as a university located in West Kalimantan, is in a strategic position to bridge the needs of human resource development in the border area. As a State Islamic Religious College (PTKIN) in West Kalimantan, IAIN Pontianak also carries the identity as a preserver of Islamic knowledge and Borneo culture (Wibowo, 2024). This geographical context and strategic role require IAIN Pontianak to contribute to the empowerment of border communities through

education that is relevant to local conditions. IAIN Pontianak as a university in West Kalimantan is expected to be a university that can be a pioneer in the PjBL model based on local natural resources, so that the results of the study "Analysis of the Utilization of Local Natural Resources in PjBL Learning in Border Region Universities" will contribute to improving the quality of higher education as well as sustainable development of border communities.

2. Methodology

This research is a qualitative research. The type of research used is field research, namely research conducted by going directly to the field (research location) with the research location at IAIN Pontianak. The research approach used is phenomenology which focuses on the individual's direct experience of a phenomenon and explores the essence of that experience. Data were collected through interview techniques, observation, and documentation with research subjects lecturers and students at IAIN Pontianak. In data analysis, techniques from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana were used which included the process of data condensation, presenting it, and drawing and verifying conclusions (Miles et al., 2014). Data validity was carried out by triangulation of techniques and triangulation of sources.

3. Results and Discussion

The research results were obtained from observations, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted by directly observing classes at IAIN Pontianak. Field data collection was conducted through interviews with lecturers and students at IAIN Pontianak. Interview data collection was carried out by asking questions as in the interview question list in Table 1 below.

Table 1. List of interview questions

Interviewee	Interview Questions
Lecturer	a. To what extent do you know and understand the concept of *Project Based Learning* (PjBL)?
	b. Based on your experience, how has the lecture process been so far in terms of the learning model used?
	c. In your opinion, what activities should lectures contain in the lecture process?
	d. In your opinion, is it necessary for students to be given project activities in their lectures?
	e. According to lecturers' perceptions, is it necessary to strengthen the participation of prospective teacher students in designing PjBL learning by utilizing local natural resources? (Yes/No), state your reasons.
	f. Is it necessary for students to be given project activities that use local natural resources in their lectures? (Yes/No) If yes, please state your reasons.
	g. Do you have experience in using local natural resources in learning projects?

	h.	If you have had experience using local natural resources in learning projects, please describe the types of local natural resources you have used!
	i.	What skills do you feel need to be improved to be successful in PjBL?
	j.	What is your motivation for getting involved in the PjBL project?
	k.	Is there anything else you would like to add regarding your needs in designing and implementing PjBL?
Student	a.	Are you interested in getting involved in a PjBL project that utilizes local natural resources?
	b.	To what extent do you know and understand the concept of Project Based Learning (PjBL)?
	c.	Based on your experience, how has the lecture process been so far in terms of the learning model used?
	d.	In your opinion, is it necessary for students to be given project activities that use local natural resources in their lectures? (Yes/No) If yes, please state your reasons.
	e.	Do you have experience in using local natural resources in learning projects?
	f.	If you have had experience using local natural resources in learning projects, please describe the types of local natural resources you have used!
	g.	What skills do you feel need to be improved to be successful in PjBL?
	h.	What type of support do you think is most needed to be successful in PjBL?

Based on the research conducted, the results and discussions can be presented which are divided into the following sub-sections:

a. Utilization of Local Natural Resources as Teaching Materials and Projects

The results of the study indicate that there are various local natural resources that have the potential to be utilized in project-based learning (PjBL). However, the use of local natural resources is still very limited, such as in plantation products, namely coconut, sweet potato, corn, and pineapple. In fact, there are many local natural resources that can be utilized in border areas. Natural potential can be obtained from the superior sectors of border areas in the form of agricultural products in the form of food crops, plantations, fishery products, and mining (Achmad, 2016) (Elyta et al., 2024).

Biodiversity in border areas is very diverse, covering various ecosystems and species diversity in them. Various types of medicinal plants identified are found in forest and lake ecosystems (Ginting et al., 2017). Medicinal plants that are widely used and utilized by the Dayak and Malay ethnic groups in border areas in this case West Kalimantan such as pasak bumi, kumis kucing, rosella, mengkudu, pepper, lemongrass, turmeric, starfruit, cassava, betel, and kesum leaves (Purwati et al., n.d.). Other non-timber forest products such as bamboo and forest honey are also abundant. In Entikong (Sanggau), rope bamboo (Gigantochloa hasskarliana) grows abundantly as a forest product; however, so far its use has been limited to building materials and garden fences (Tavita et al., 2021). In addition, natural resources in the form of mines, such as gold and coal (Marihandono, 2016). Other minerals include petroleum and bauxite (Elyta et al., 2024). The abundance of local natural resources requires more optimal utilization so that sustainability can be maintained.

This finding confirms that the natural wealth in border areas has not been optimally utilized in the world of education, especially in active learning approaches such as PjBL.

b. Implementation of PJBL Based on Local Natural Resources

From the results of the study, concrete examples of the use of local natural resources in PjBL were identified. Lecturers design project assignments that utilize local natural and cultural wealth as objects of study. In this case, PjBL has been applied to learning in several courses at IAIN Pontianak with a locality approach, but its implementation is still partial. The applications found include elementary school teacher education students at IAIN Pontianak conducting a project to make food products from processed ingredients from local natural resources. This activity is carried out by designing PjBL learning that is directed to get to know various types of Pontianak specialties, from the basic ingredients to the resulting products. For example, by exploring kesum leaves which are a typical regional plant to be made into spicy porridge. In this case, lecturers can also direct students to explore the taxonomy of the kesum plant. This finding is in line with the literature on contextual learning, where the use of the surrounding environment as a learning resource can bridge theory with real practice (Surdin et al., 2020).

Lecturers utilize local natural potential, such as biodiversity, local agricultural/plantation products, as teaching materials and project themes for students. This strategy is believed to be able to overcome the limitations of conventional learning resources in 3T areas (frontier, outermost, disadvantaged) and foster learning experiences that are relevant to local needs (Perdana et al., n.d.). Previous studies support this approach; for example, project-based science learning designed with local potential has been shown to help students link academic concepts with real applications in their area, so that they understand the scientific value of the local natural resource potential. The qualitative findings in this study also reflect the same thing: both lecturers and students identified that local natural resource-based projects made lecture materials easier to understand because they were directly related to daily life conditions on the border.

Effective implementation of PjBL is highly dependent on clear stages from planning to reflection. These findings are consistent with research that confirms that the field exploration stage is very important in activating the student learning process directly with the surrounding environment (Kasman, 2025). However, the low participation of lecturers in implementing this method indicates the need to improve lecturer competence through systematic training and workshops. In addition, other benefits felt by students in the form of increased learning motivation and awareness of environmental conservation have positive implications for the development of sustainable higher education in border areas. This is relevant to studies showing that a project-based approach involving local natural resources can have a positive impact on students' environmental attitudes and behavior (Annafi & Agustina, 2018). Students will become more active in classroom learning.

PJBL learning that integrates local natural resources has been shown to increase student involvement, as well as form contextual understanding and a sense of responsibility for regional potential. This makes students more active in learning. This finding is in line with research showing that increasing student activity and learning outcomes can be done by implementing PjBL (Rahmawati et al., 2024). However, not all lecturers in their lectures implement PJBL and although PJBL has been implemented by some other lecturers, the use of local natural resources is still not optimal or is very limited to only a few natural resources.

c. Support and Obstacles

The lecturers realize the importance of conducting a project activity in learning using local natural resources. This was expressed so that students can recognize and grow a sense of ownership of local natural resources. In addition, this project can support the preservation of local culture.Supporting factors for the implementation of PjBL based on local natural resources in border areas include the availability of abundant and unique natural resources, support from lecturers who care about local development, and collaboration with the surrounding community. However, there are several major obstacles, namely the lack of documentation and academic studies on local natural resources, limited funds and supporting facilities for student projects, and a curriculum that is not yet fully flexible for a local approach. In addition, the competence of lecturers is not evenly distributed in implementing this approach.

The success of PjBL implementation is also greatly influenced by adequate facilities and strong collaboration with related stakeholders, including the community and the local industry. The findings regarding limited facilities and minimal collaboration reinforce the findings of previous studies which stated that the involvement of local stakeholders is an important element in supporting the success of PjBL (Mulyono, 2023). In overcoming the various obstacles that arise, universities need to establish strategic cooperation with local governments, research institutions, and the business world with the aim of supporting the development of facilities and infrastructure, lecturer training, and opening up market opportunities for student innovation products.

d. Impact of Learning on Students

The findings of this study reveal that the use of local natural resources in PjBL learning can contribute to increasing motivation, conceptual understanding, creativity, activeness and awareness of students regarding the importance of environmental conservation in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area. The selection of herbal and endemic plants and agricultural products as the main focus in student projects is a strategic step considering the great potential of the area. This is in line with previous studies which emphasize that learning based on local natural resources can increase the relevance of learning materials to students' real lives (Usman et al., 2023) (Damayanti et al., 2024).

Students involved in PJBL based on local natural resources showed improvements in critical thinking skills (Susanto et al., 2021) (Kamaruddin et al., 2024) and creativity (Kamaruddin et al., 2024), a sense of ownership of their home region, and real-world collaboration and problem-solving skills. In general, PJBL based on local natural resources contributes to strengthening contextual education and national character, which are very relevant in border areas. In this case, PJBL can develop the professionalism of lecturers and students. In addition, there is a contribution to the environment. And practical experience that is carried out contextually makes learning more meaningful. The lecturers said that in order to be able to implement PjBL based on local wisdom, it is necessary to have mature project planning, time management, teamwork, creativity in utilizing natural resources, and assessment and evaluation of the project activities.

Students involved in contextual projects tend to better understand cultural values and local practices that are relevant to their fields of study. Students' local literacy and character develop, for example awareness of traditional wisdom in the sustainable use of nature. The literature review supports this finding - PjBL based on ethnoscience or local wisdom makes students not only learn academically, but also understand local culture and values more deeply, while encouraging critical thinking about issues in their community (Kamaruddin et al., 2024). Thus, it is clear that both lecturers and students view PjBL based on local natural resources as very relevant to the context of higher education in border areas, because it brings the campus closer to the surrounding community while improving the quality of learning itself. Overall, the results of this study confirm that the utilization of local natural resources in project-based learning in border universities has great potential to be further developed, not only to improve the quality of learning but also to contribute to sustainable regional development.

4. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research and discussion that have been presented, the conclusion obtained is that the utilization of local natural resources in Project Based Learning (PjBL) in universities in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area has a significant positive impact. This learning has been proven to be able to increase learning motivation, students' understanding of local potential, creativity in producing innovative products, and foster awareness of conservation and environmental preservation among students.

However, the implementation of PjBL learning based on local natural resources still encounters several obstacles, including limited facilities and supporting facilities, uneven competence of lecturers in implementing this learning model, and minimal collaboration with the local community and industry. Therefore, strategic steps are needed in the form of increasing the capacity of lecturers through training and workshops, developing supporting infrastructure, and strengthening cooperation with related stakeholders to optimize the benefits of PjBL learning based on local natural resources in the Indonesia-Malaysia border area.

From the results of this study, it is recommended that training on PjBL be designed, access to local natural resources, guidance from instructors or expert lecturers, and providing examples of successful projects so that they can be used as additional references in designing PjBL activities based on this local wisdom.

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