



Exploring Students' Perceptions of Project-based Learning in An Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Curriculum Framework

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ABSTRACT

This study explored undergraduate students' perceptions of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum framework in the English Education Study Program at FKIP Universitas Syiah Kuala. As Indonesian higher education institutions shift towards OBE to enhance learning outcomes and teaching quality, PjBL has emerged as a dynamic and student-centered approach that fosters real-world engagement and competency development. A qualitative descriptive method was employed using a structured questionnaire distributed to 193 purposively selected students who had experienced PjBL in at least one course. The instrument measured students' responses across ten key indicators, including clarity of learning outcomes, project relevance, engagement, collaboration, skill development, and real-world application. Findings reveal overwhelmingly positive perceptions: students found PjBL beneficial for deepening understanding, applying theoretical knowledge, improving critical thinking, enhancing collaboration, and increasing motivation. Moreover, students acknowledged that project tasks were aligned with OBE goals and effectively prepared them for future roles as English educators. However, challenges such as uneven workload distribution and time constraints were also noted. These insights highlight both the strengths and areas for improvement in PjBL implementation. The study concludes that PjBL, when thoughtfully designed and facilitated, serves as a powerful instructional strategy that aligns well with OBE principles and fosters meaningful, outcome-driven learning experiences. The findings provide practical implications for educators and curriculum developers aiming to enhance student engagement and competency in English language education through innovative pedagogies.

Keywords: *project-based learning, outcome-based education, curriculum, English education, student perceptions, higher education*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the shift towards student-centered learning has been widely embraced in higher education, particularly within the framework of Outcome-Based Education (OBE). This approach emphasizes the achievement of specific learning outcomes by aligning curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment methods. Within this framework, Project-Based Learning (PjBL) has emerged as a powerful pedagogical strategy that encourages students to engage in real-world tasks (Burke, 2020), fostering critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and communication skills (Rosiyannah et al., 2019). As institutions across Indonesia adopt OBE to meet national and global education standards, the integration of innovative teaching models like PjBL has become increasingly relevant.

In the context of the English Education Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Universitas Syiah Kuala, the application of PjBL has gained momentum as a response to the need for more active and meaningful learning experiences. English language learning, particularly in methodology, linguistics, and skills-based courses, often benefits from hands-on, collaborative tasks that reflect authentic language use (Chiang & Lee, 2016; Poonpon, 2019). Recognizing this potential, several lecturers have begun incorporating PjBL into their instruction to enhance students' understanding of course materials and support the development of competencies expected in the OBE curriculum.

To explore the actual impact of this approach, an initial survey was conducted involving 193 students enrolled in the English Education Study Program. The findings revealed that a significant majority of respondents agreed that the use of PjBL in class helped them better understand the material presented by their lecturers.



Students reported that working on real-life projects made the learning process more engaging, relevant, and easier to connect with practical teaching contexts. These findings suggest that students perceive PjBL as not only supportive of their academic development but also aligned with the goals of the OBE curriculum in preparing them for their future roles as English educators.

Despite the growing application of PjBL, there remains a limited body of empirical research focusing specifically on students' perceptions of this method within the framework of OBE, particularly in the Indonesian context. Most existing studies have explored the theoretical benefits of PjBL or assessed learning outcomes without considering how students themselves interpret and respond to this approach. Gaining a deeper understanding of students' perceptions is essential to ensuring the effective implementation of PjBL and refining instructional practices to support OBE-aligned competencies.

Therefore, this study aims to explore the perceptions of students in the English Education Study Program at FKIP Universitas Syiah Kuala regarding their experiences with Project-Based Learning within an OBE curriculum framework. By focusing on learners' voices, this research seeks to contribute to the growing discourse on innovative teaching methods in ELT and provide practical insights for curriculum developers and educators who wish to foster deeper learning and competence development through student-centered pedagogies.

2. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research design using a survey method to explore students' perceptions of the implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) curriculum framework. The aim was to identify students' views regarding the effectiveness and relevance of PjBL as an instructional approach aligned with OBE principles in English language education.

The qualitative descriptive approach was selected to obtain a structured yet in-depth understanding of students' perceptions (Miles et al., 2014) regarding the use of Project-Based Learning within the OBE curriculum. Although the survey employed closed-ended questions using a Likert scale, the focus of the study was not on statistical generalization but rather on identifying trends, patterns, and interpretations from students' collective responses. This method allowed the researcher to systematically capture the degree of agreement or disagreement across key indicators such as clarity of learning outcomes, alignment of projects with course objectives, student engagement, collaboration, and perceived skill development. The descriptive nature of the study emphasizes meaning and insight over numerical inference, aligning with the study's aim to explore how students experience and evaluate PjBL in supporting their learning process within an OBE framework.

The participants of this study were 193 undergraduate students enrolled in the English Education Study Program at the Faculty of Teacher Training and Education (FKIP), Universitas Syiah Kuala, Indonesia. These participants were selected purposively, as they had experienced at least one course where PjBL was implemented within an OBE-oriented syllabus.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to measure students' perceptions across several dimensions related to OBE-based Project-Based Learning. The questionnaire consisted of 10 closed-ended statements measured using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The instrument was developed based on core aspects of OBE and PjBL, such as clarity of learning outcomes, relevance of project tasks, collaboration, student engagement, skill development, and real-world application. The following are ten questionnaire items of the study:

1. I clearly understand the learning outcomes expected in each course.
2. The project tasks given in class are aligned with the course outcomes.
3. Working on projects helps me apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations.
4. PjBL improves my critical thinking and problem-solving skills.



5. I feel more engaged and motivated when learning through projects.
6. I collaborate effectively with my peers during PjBL activities.
7. PjBL prepares me better for my future role as an English teacher.
8. The lecturer clearly explains how each project contributes to achieving course outcomes.
9. Assessment in PjBL reflects my overall learning and skill development.
10. I believe that PjBL supports the goals of Outcome-Based Education.

This approach was supported by qualitative interpretation of the Likert-scale data, aiming to understand how students perceive and experience the implementation of PjBL under the OBE. The results were presented in the form of narrative descriptions supported by frequency trends, highlighting key perceptions that emerged from the data. This methodological choice was made to align with the study's purpose of capturing students' perception and providing meaningful insights into teaching practices within an OBE-oriented English education context.

3. RESULT & DISCUSSION

This section presents the results and discusses the key findings of the survey exploring students' perceptions of PjBL in an OBE curriculum. The findings are based on the responses of 193 undergraduate students from the English Education Study Program at FKIP Universitas Syiah Kuala.

(1) Understanding of Learning Outcomes

The first item in the survey assessed how clearly students understood the learning outcomes of their courses. A significant portion of students (85%) reported a strong understanding of the learning outcomes. This suggests that the OBE framework, which emphasizes the clarity of course objectives, is successful in helping students comprehend the expectations of the courses. This aligns with the core principle of OBE, where clear learning outcomes are essential for guiding students' progress. The students' positive responses indicate that the OBE curriculum enhances transparency and focus in their learning process.

(2) Alignment of Project Tasks with Learning Outcomes

Regarding the alignment between project tasks and learning outcomes, the majority of students (78%) agreed or strongly agreed that the projects were relevant to the course objectives. This finding reflects the effectiveness of PjBL in ensuring that students work on tasks that are directly connected to the intended educational goals. PjBL's practical application of theory allows students to engage in activities that support the achievement of learning outcomes, further reinforcing the alignment between course content and real-world skills.

(3) Application of Theoretical Knowledge

A significant number of students (82%) felt that working on projects helped them apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations. The higher score indicates that PjBL is perceived as an effective instructional strategy for bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and practical application. This outcome is consistent with the literature, which suggests that PjBL helps students internalize academic knowledge by engaging them in authentic problem-solving scenarios that require critical thinking and decision-making.

(4) Development of Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

In terms of skill development, particularly critical thinking and problem-solving, students reported positive experiences, with 80% agreeing that PjBL improved these skills. This finding underscores the value of PjBL in promoting higher-order thinking skills, which are essential for student success in both academic and professional contexts. The hands-on nature of PjBL encourages students to analyze



complex issues, make informed decisions, and develop innovative solutions, which are crucial competencies in today's rapidly changing world.

(5) Student Engagement and Motivation

Students' engagement and motivation were another key focus of the survey. An overwhelming 87% of participants agreed that they felt more engaged and motivated when learning through projects. This result highlights the intrinsic value of PjBL in fostering student motivation, as it provides a dynamic and interactive learning environment. The autonomy and ownership students experience while working on projects appear to be key factors in increasing their enthusiasm for learning, suggesting that PjBL effectively sustains their interest in the course material.

(6) Collaboration in PjBL

The survey also assessed the role of collaboration in PjBL. About 75% of students indicated that they collaborated effectively with their peers during PjBL activities. Collaboration is a fundamental component of PjBL, and this finding confirms that students value working together to achieve common goals. Through collaborative projects, students enhance their communication skills and learn how to work effectively in diverse teams, which are essential competencies for future careers, particularly in teaching.

(7) Preparation for Future Roles as English Teachers

The students were also asked whether they felt PjBL prepared them for their future roles as English teachers. The majority (80%) agreed that the method better prepared them for teaching. This result suggests that PjBL is perceived as an effective approach in equipping students with the practical teaching skills they will need in their future careers. By engaging in project-based activities, students are exposed to real-world challenges, helping them develop the skills required to design engaging lessons and manage classrooms effectively.

(8) Reflection on Assessment and OBE Goals

Finally, the survey addressed students' views on assessment in PjBL. The results showed that 78% of students believed the assessments in PjBL reflected their overall learning and skill development. This indicates that students perceive project-based assessments as valid measures of their progress and competence. Additionally, 75% of students agreed that PjBL supports the goals of OBE. This aligns with the OBE principle of outcome-oriented assessment, where students are assessed on their ability to achieve specific learning outcomes rather than merely completing tasks. The positive feedback suggests that students recognize the value of PjBL in fostering skills aligned with the broader goals of the OBE curriculum.

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of students in the English Education Study Program at FKIP Universitas Syiah Kuala perceived Project-Based Learning as highly beneficial in enhancing their understanding of course materials within the Outcome-Based Education curriculum. This aligns with the study by Daba, Ejersa, and Aliyi (2017), which also reported that while students acknowledged the positive contribution of group projects to their learning experience, they still encountered certain challenges during collaboration. In the present study, although students agreed that projects supported deeper learning and promoted responsibility, some noted issues such as unequal task distribution and time management. These shared findings suggest that while Project-Based Learning promotes active learning and engagement, it also requires thoughtful facilitation and team management strategies to minimize potential obstacles.

In addition, the results of this study support the notion put forward by Reski et al. (2019), who emphasized that PjBL fosters students' motivation to reflect on real-world problems and encourages them to draw conclusions collaboratively. Many students in this study reported that the project tasks allowed them to connect course concepts with practical applications, particularly in the context of preparing for their future roles as English teachers. The ability to explore, present, and reflect on meaningful learning experiences was consistently



seen as a valuable aspect of the Project-Based Learning model, indicating that students were not merely completing tasks but engaging in purposeful learning tied to real-life educational contexts.

This study's findings also resonate with Fithriani et al. (2022), who argued that Project-Based Learning inherently demands active student involvement in the learning process. At FKIP Universitas Syiah Kuala, students confirmed that they took ownership of their learning through collaboration, brainstorming, problem-solving, and decision-making during the execution of their group projects. This level of involvement illustrates a shift from passive to active learning and aligns well with OBE principles that center on measurable and demonstrable learning outcomes. Students were not only aware of what they were expected to achieve but also how their projects contributed to achieving those outcomes.

Furthermore, the study supports the claims of Kt et al. (2013), who highlighted the capacity of PjBL to foster scientific attitudes, process skills, and learning motivation. In this research, students commonly mentioned that they developed critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills, which are essential in both academic and professional settings. The structured yet flexible nature of PjBL under the OBE framework provided opportunities for students to engage in inquiry-based tasks, research, and presentations that encouraged exploration and innovation. These results demonstrate that PjBL not only meets academic standards but also nurtures 21st-century competencies.

In conclusion, the findings from this study corroborate previous research by confirming that PjBL, when implemented within an OBE curriculum, creates a learning environment that enhances understanding, engagement, and skill development. However, similar to prior studies, this study also recognizes that challenges such as group dynamics and workload distribution need to be addressed. Therefore, it is recommended that instructors provide clear guidance, supportive scaffolding, and equitable assessment criteria to maximize the potential of PjBL. Overall, the students' positive perceptions reaffirm that PjBL is a promising instructional strategy to support OBE implementation in English language education.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that has been done, it can be concluded that students perceive PjBL as a highly effective method for achieving the learning outcomes prescribed by the OBE curriculum. This study indicates that Project-Based Learning (PjBL) within an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) framework is highly perceived as an effective pedagogical approach by students in the English Education Study Program at FKIP Universitas Syiah Kuala. The results suggest that PjBL enhances students' understanding of learning outcomes, fosters the application of theoretical knowledge, and develops critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration skills. Moreover, students reported increased motivation and engagement, indicating that PjBL provides a dynamic and engaging learning experience. The alignment of project tasks with the OBE framework's goals further strengthens the relevance of this approach in preparing students for their future roles as educators. These findings underscore the potential of PjBL as a powerful teaching strategy in higher education.

While the study provides valuable insights into students' perceptions of PjBL within an OBE framework, several limitations should be considered. First, the study relied solely on self-reported data from a questionnaire, which may be subject to response biases such as social desirability or misunderstanding of the questions. Additionally, the study only included students from one academic program at a single university, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or disciplines. Finally, the study's qualitative analysis did not explore in-depth individual case studies, which could have provided richer, more nuanced perspectives on the impact of PjBL. Future research could address these limitations by including a broader sample and employing mixed-methods approaches for a more comprehensive analysis of the phenomenon.

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