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PROJECT BASED LEARNING (PJBL) IN THE COURSE OF ORGANIZATION THEORY IN STIMULATING SELF DIRECTED LEARNING (SDL)

Linardo Pratama [1], Rinita Istiqomah[2], Bradley Setiyadi [3], Denny Denmar [4]
[1,2,3,4] Universitas Jambi, Indonesia

Email: rinitaistiqomah@unja.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a best practice in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) integrated with the Case Method in the Organizational Theory course to stimulate students' Self-Directed Learning (SDL) in the Educational Administration Study Program, Universitas Jambi. The innovation was developed in response to students' limited learning autonomy and their dependence on lecturer-centered instruction. The best practice involved 30 undergraduate students organized into ten collaborative groups. Students completed an authentic project requiring them to design a proposal for establishing an educational institution by applying concepts of organizational theory through Project-Based Learning. The implementation was documented through classroom observations, project documentation, presentations, and lecturer reflections. The implementation demonstrated that Project-Based Learning created a more active and student-centered learning environment. Students became more independent in identifying learning needs, exploring learning resources, collaborating with peers, solving organizational problems, and applying theoretical concepts to authentic educational contexts. The project also strengthened students' critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and organizational analysis skills while encouraging greater responsibility for their own learning. This best practice indicates that integrating Project-Based Learning with the Case Method effectively stimulates Self-Directed Learning and supports the development of professional competencies required by prospective educational administrators.

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menyajikan praktik baik (best practice) implementasi Project-Based Learning (PjBL) yang dipadukan dengan Case Method pada mata kuliah Teori Organisasi untuk menstimulasi Self-Directed Learning (SDL) mahasiswa Program Studi Administrasi Pendidikan Universitas Jambi. Inovasi pembelajaran ini dikembangkan sebagai respons terhadap rendahnya kemandirian belajar mahasiswa yang masih cenderung bergantung pada pembelajaran berpusat pada dosen. Praktik baik ini melibatkan 30 mahasiswa yang dibagi ke dalam sepuluh kelompok. Mahasiswa melaksanakan proyek autentik berupa penyusunan proposal pendirian lembaga pendidikan dengan menerapkan konsep-konsep Teori Organisasi melalui pendekatan Project-Based Learning. Implementasi pembelajaran didokumentasikan melalui observasi kelas, dokumentasi proyek, presentasi mahasiswa, dan refleksi dosen. Implementasi Project-Based Learning menciptakan lingkungan belajar yang lebih aktif dan berpusat pada mahasiswa. Mahasiswa menunjukkan peningkatan kemandirian dalam mengidentifikasi kebutuhan belajar, menelusuri berbagai sumber belajar, bekerja sama dalam kelompok, menyelesaikan permasalahan organisasi, serta menerapkan konsep-konsep organisasi pada konteks pendidikan yang nyata. Selain itu, kegiatan proyek turut mengembangkan kemampuan berpikir kritis, komunikasi, kolaborasi, dan analisis organisasi sekaligus meningkatkan tanggung jawab mahasiswa terhadap proses belajarnya. Praktik baik ini menunjukkan bahwa integrasi Project-Based Learning dengan Case Method efektif dalam menstimulasi Self-Directed Learning serta mendukung pengembangan kompetensi profesional calon tenaga administrasi pendidikan.

***Kata Kunci**: Teori Organisasi; Project-Based Learning; Self-Directed Learning; Administrasi Pendidikan; Praktik Baik*

INTRODUCTION

Humans are social beings who continuously interact and establish reciprocal relationships with others in order to fulfil individual and collective needs. Organizations provide a structured environment in which individuals interact, cooperate, coordinate activities, and utilize available resources to achieve shared objectives. In educational contexts, organizations are particularly important because educational goals require systematic coordination among individuals, structures, resources, and institutional processes. Therefore, understanding organizations is essential for students who are preparing to work as educational administrators and managers (Panuntun, 2020; Ilwan, 2021).

The development of organizations has subsequently contributed to the emergence and evolution of organizational theory as an important field of study. Organizational theory provides conceptual foundations for understanding organizational structures, scientific management, bureaucracy, rational planning, productivity, cooperation, motivation, and organizations as open systems. The evolution of organizational theory has produced classical, neoclassical, and modern perspectives that provide different approaches to understanding organizational phenomena (Setiyadi, 2020). Consequently, Organizational Theory is not merely theoretical knowledge but also provides an analytical framework that enables students to understand how organizations function, adapt, and respond to changes in their internal and external environments.

Within the Educational Administration Study Program, the Organizational Theory course (AMP112) plays an important role in developing students' ability to analyze organizational structures, organizational design, organizational culture, and the relationship between educational organizations and their environments. The course is expected to develop students' logical, critical, systematic, and innovative thinking skills as well as their ability to analyze information, make professional decisions, and formulate alternative solutions to educational governance problems. These competencies are increasingly important because educational organizations operate in complex and dynamic environments that require educational administrators to demonstrate analytical thinking, problem-solving ability, collaboration, and independent decision-making.

However, achieving these competencies requires students to actively participate in constructing their knowledge rather than merely receiving information from lecturers. Learning is fundamentally a process through which students construct and reconstruct knowledge, develop learning strategies, evaluate information, and apply knowledge to solve problems. This perspective places students as active participants in the learning process and emphasizes the importance of learning independence. Self-Directed Learning (SDL), therefore, becomes particularly relevant because it encourages learners to take responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning processes (Isnaini et al., 2019).

Preliminary observations conducted by the lecturer team in the Organizational Theory course revealed a gap between the expected learning outcomes and students' actual learning behavior. Students tended to rely heavily on materials and explanations provided by lecturers, while independent exploration of learning resources outside classroom activities remained limited. Students also tended not to continue studying after face-to-face sessions unless specific assignments were provided. These observations indicate that learning activities were still characterized by relatively high lecturer dependency, whereas the expected course outcomes require students to demonstrate independence, analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, and autonomous decision-making. This discrepancy

represents an important pedagogical problem that needs to be addressed through an appropriate instructional intervention.

The urgency of strengthening students' learning independence becomes more apparent when considering the characteristics of SDL. Self-Directed Learning refers to learners' capacity to determine learning objectives, identify learning needs, select appropriate strategies and resources, solve learning problems, manage their own learning activities, and evaluate their learning performance. Students with stronger SDL competencies are more capable of developing lifelong learning skills, autonomy, confidence, and responsibility for their academic development (Gibbons, 2002). Furthermore, SDL encourages students to become actively involved in managing cognitive and affective processes required to accomplish academic tasks successfully (Permatasari & Anggryani, 2021). Therefore, insufficient learning independence may prevent students from achieving the analytical and managerial competencies expected from the Organizational Theory course.

To illustrate the empirical problem identified during the preliminary observation, the gap between expected learning characteristics and observed student learning behavior can be summarized as follows.

Table 1.
Preliminary Learning Problems Identified in the Organizational Theory Course

Expected Learning Characteristics	Preliminary Observation	Identified Gap
Students independently explore learning resources	Students predominantly depend on materials provided by lecturers	Limited learning independence
Students continue learning beyond classroom sessions	Learning activities outside class tend to occur primarily when assignments are given	Limited learning initiative
Students actively construct knowledge	Students tend to rely on lecturer explanations	Lecturer dependency
Students identify and solve organizational problems	Opportunities to investigate authentic organizational problems remain limited	Limited problem-solving experience
Students manage their own learning process	Students require substantial lecturer direction during learning activities	Limited Self-Directed Learning
Students apply organizational concepts in authentic contexts	Learning tends to emphasize conceptual understanding	Theory–practice gap

Source: Preliminary observation by the research team in the Organizational Theory course.

These conditions demonstrate the need for an instructional approach that provides students with greater responsibility and autonomy while simultaneously engaging them in authentic learning activities. One approach considered appropriate for addressing this problem is Project-Based Learning (PjBL). PjBL positions students as active learners who investigate problems, collect relevant information, collaborate with peers, develop solutions, make decisions, and produce tangible outcomes. Unlike conventional learning that predominantly emphasizes knowledge transmission, PjBL creates opportunities for students to construct knowledge through authentic and meaningful learning experiences.

The characteristics of PjBL are theoretically consistent with the principles of Self-Directed Learning. Through project activities, students are expected to determine learning strategies, search for relevant resources, distribute responsibilities within groups, solve problems, monitor project progress, and evaluate their outcomes. SDL itself emphasizes

students' responsibility and active involvement in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities (Isnaini et al., 2019). Similarly, SDL requires individuals to determine learning goals, formulate strategies, manage themselves, solve problems, and evaluate their performance (Gibbons, 2002). Thus, integrating PjBL with SDL provides a potentially relevant pedagogical strategy for reducing students' dependence on lecturers while developing independent learning competencies.

Previous studies have also provided evidence regarding the potential relationship between active learning approaches and students' independence. Permatasari and Anggryani (2021), for example, demonstrated the relevance of SDL in encouraging students to become active participants in managing their learning processes. Previous studies of project-based learning have similarly indicated that PjBL provides students with opportunities to develop problem-solving abilities, creativity, collaboration, responsibility, and active involvement in learning. Nevertheless, the application of these approaches needs to be examined within specific disciplinary and learning contexts because different courses require different forms of project design, learning activities, and expected outcomes.

Table 2.
Summary of Previous Studies and Position of the Present Study

Author(s)	Focus	Main Contribution	Limitation/Research Gap
Isnaini et al. (2019)	Self-Directed Learning and learning achievement	Demonstrates the importance of SDL for students' responsibility and learning processes	Does not specifically examine PjBL in Organizational Theory
Panuntun (2020)	Organizational culture in education	Provides understanding of organizations within educational contexts	Does not examine instructional strategies for developing SDL
Setiyadi (2020)	Organizational theory	Explains theoretical development and approaches to organizations	Focuses on organizational concepts rather than learning interventions
Permatasari & Anggryani (2021)	SDL in learning	Shows the role of SDL in encouraging active management of learning	Different disciplinary and learning context
Ilwan (2021)	Organizational leadership	Demonstrates organizational relationships and dynamics	Does not investigate PjBL or SDL
Present Study	PjBL and SDL in Organizational Theory	Examines the implementation of authentic project activities to stimulate SDL among Educational Administration students	Addresses PjBL–SDL integration in an Organizational Theory course

The comparison presented in Table 2 reveals an important research gap. Existing literature has discussed organizational theory, organizational behavior, SDL, and project-oriented learning from various perspectives; however, these topics have generally been examined separately. Research specifically exploring how Project-Based Learning can be implemented to stimulate Self-Directed Learning within an Organizational Theory course for Educational Administration students remains limited. This gap is particularly relevant because

Organizational Theory requires students not only to understand organizational concepts but also to analyze organizational problems, make decisions, develop organizational designs, and apply theoretical knowledge to authentic educational contexts.

Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in positioning Project-Based Learning as a pedagogical mechanism for stimulating Self-Directed Learning within the disciplinary context of Organizational Theory in Educational Administration. Instead of examining PjBL merely in relation to academic achievement, this study focuses on how project activities provide opportunities for students to demonstrate learning initiative, resource exploration, problem solving, collaboration, responsibility, and autonomous learning. In this study, students are engaged in an authentic project requiring them to develop a proposal for establishing an educational organization, thereby connecting organizational concepts with practical educational management problems.

Based on these considerations, this study aims to describe the implementation of Project-Based Learning in the Organizational Theory course in stimulating Self-Directed Learning among students of the Educational Administration Study Program at Universitas Jambi. Specifically, the study addresses the following research question: How is Project-Based Learning implemented in the Organizational Theory course to stimulate Self-Directed Learning among Educational Administration students? The findings are expected to provide practical evidence regarding the use of project-oriented learning to strengthen students' independence while contributing to the development of student-centered instructional practices in Educational Administration.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Theory

Organizational theory has evolved to explain how organizations are established, structured, managed, and adapted to environmental changes. The evolution of organizational theory has contributed significantly to the development of management and other social sciences because organizations are viewed as dynamic systems that continuously interact with internal and external environments. Historically, organizational theory has developed through three major perspectives: the classical approach, which emphasizes organizational efficiency and formal structures; the neoclassical approach, which highlights human relations and employee behavior; and the modern approach, which considers organizations as open systems interacting with complex environmental conditions (Setiyadi, 2020).

Organizations are generally defined as a collectivity of individuals who consciously cooperate to achieve predetermined goals (Thoha, 2011). Similarly, Pawirosumarto and Sinaga (2020) described organizations as goal-oriented social entities consisting of structured and coordinated activities that interact continuously with their external environment. From this perspective, organizations function as systems in which planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling are carried out systematically to utilize available human and material resources effectively and efficiently in achieving organizational objectives (Setiyadi, 2023).

Within educational institutions, organizational theory provides an important conceptual framework for understanding educational governance, leadership, organizational culture, decision-making processes, and institutional effectiveness. Educational organizations operate in increasingly dynamic environments characterized by technological advancement, policy changes, stakeholder expectations, and educational innovation. Consequently,

prospective educational administrators are expected not only to understand theoretical concepts of organizational structure and behavior but also to develop analytical competencies that enable them to diagnose organizational problems and formulate appropriate solutions. Therefore, Organizational Theory serves as one of the core courses in Educational Administration programs because it prepares students to become professional educational managers capable of responding to organizational challenges.

Recent studies also suggest that organizational theory should no longer be understood merely as theoretical knowledge but as a practical framework for developing managerial competence, critical thinking, and organizational decision-making skills within higher education. Contemporary organizational learning increasingly emphasizes collaborative problem-solving, knowledge construction, and adaptive thinking as essential competencies required by future educational leaders.

Project-Based Learning (PjBL)

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is a student-centered instructional approach that engages learners in investigating authentic problems and producing meaningful products through collaborative project activities. Unlike traditional lecture-based instruction, PjBL positions students as active participants who construct knowledge by integrating theoretical concepts with practical experiences. Throughout project implementation, students are expected to identify problems, formulate solutions, collect relevant information, collaborate with peers, and present project outcomes, thereby encouraging deeper conceptual understanding and higher-order thinking skills.

According to Patmanthara (2016), Project-Based Learning provides opportunities for students to become actively involved in meaningful learning experiences through authentic projects that require investigation, problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration. Likewise, Rati et al. (2017) explained that PjBL focuses on central concepts, authentic investigation, student autonomy, and the production of tangible learning outcomes. These characteristics enable students to connect classroom learning with real-life situations while simultaneously strengthening critical thinking and communication skills.

Recent literature further indicates that Project-Based Learning contributes positively to learning engagement, academic achievement, collaborative competence, creativity, and independent learning among university students. Because projects require students to organize learning activities independently, evaluate their own progress, and make decisions throughout the learning process, PjBL naturally supports the development of learner autonomy and lifelong learning competencies (Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Guo et al., 2020).

Self-Directed Learning (SDL)

Self-Directed Learning (SDL) refers to learners' ability to take primary responsibility for planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning activities. Rather than depending entirely on instructors, self-directed learners identify their own learning needs, establish learning goals, determine appropriate learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes independently (Isnaini et al., 2019).

Gibbons (2002) explained that SDL enables learners to determine personal learning objectives, formulate strategies, solve learning problems, manage learning resources, and evaluate their own performance. Consequently, students possessing strong SDL competencies tend to demonstrate higher autonomy, self-confidence, motivation, responsibility, and readiness for lifelong learning. Similarly, Permatasari and Anggryani

(2021) emphasized that SDL encourages students to actively regulate both cognitive and affective processes required for successful academic performance.

In higher education, Self-Directed Learning has become increasingly important because university students are expected to develop independent learning habits beyond classroom activities. Students who possess strong SDL competencies are generally better prepared to adapt to technological change, continuously update their knowledge, and solve increasingly complex professional problems. Therefore, SDL is widely recognized as one of the key competencies supporting lifelong learning and professional development.

Relationship between Organizational Theory, Project-Based Learning, and Self-Directed Learning

The characteristics of Organizational Theory require students not only to understand organizational concepts but also to analyze organizational structures, diagnose organizational problems, and formulate appropriate managerial solutions. Such competencies cannot be developed effectively through passive learning approaches alone. Instead, learning activities should encourage students to actively construct knowledge while engaging with authentic organizational situations.

Project-Based Learning provides learning experiences that are consistent with these requirements because students are involved in solving authentic organizational problems through collaborative project activities. During project implementation, students independently search for information, formulate organizational designs, evaluate alternative solutions, and present project outcomes. These learning activities correspond directly with the characteristics of Self-Directed Learning, which emphasize learner autonomy, initiative, responsibility, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation (Gibbons, 2002; Permatasari & Anggryani, 2021).

Therefore, integrating Project-Based Learning into the Organizational Theory course is theoretically expected to stimulate students' Self-Directed Learning while simultaneously strengthening their analytical, managerial, collaborative, and problem-solving competencies. This conceptual relationship forms the theoretical foundation of the present study, which investigates how Project-Based Learning can be implemented to stimulate Self-Directed Learning among students enrolled in the Organizational Theory course.

METHOD

This article presents a best practice in implementing Project-Based Learning (PjBL) integrated with the Case Method in the Organizational Theory course within the Educational Administration Study Program, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Jambi. The best practice approach was selected to describe an innovative instructional strategy designed to stimulate students' Self-Directed Learning (SDL) through authentic project activities in higher education.

The implementation involved 30 undergraduate students enrolled in the Organizational Theory (AMP112) course. Students were organized into 10 collaborative groups, each consisting of three members. Throughout the semester, students completed a project requiring them to develop a proposal for establishing an educational institution. The project required students to apply theoretical concepts of organizational structure, organizational culture, organizational design, and educational management to authentic educational contexts.

The learning activities were implemented using the principles of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) combined with the Case Method, where students were encouraged to investigate

authentic educational problems, identify organizational needs, formulate organizational solutions, and produce a comprehensive organizational proposal. Throughout the learning process, lecturers acted primarily as facilitators by guiding discussions, monitoring project progress, providing formative feedback, and encouraging students to reflect on their learning experiences.

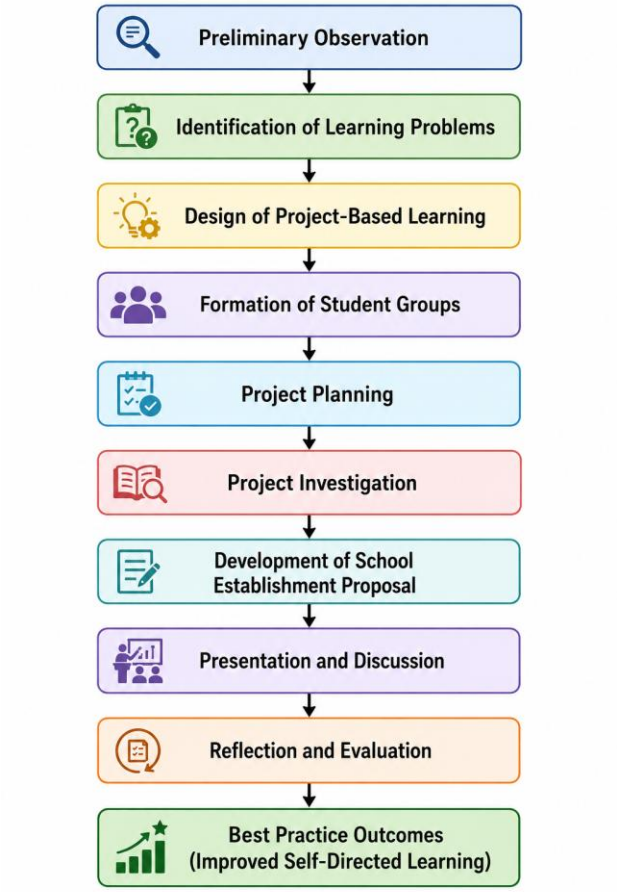
The implementation of the learning innovation consisted of six sequential stages adapted from the Project-Based Learning model.

Table 3. Stages of Project-Based Learning Implementation

Stage	**Learning Activities**	**Expected Learning Outcomes**
1. Problem Orientation	Lecturers introduced authentic cases related to establishing educational organizations and explained project objectives.	Students understand learning objectives and identify organizational problems.
2. Project Planning	Students formed groups, discussed project plans, and determined project schedules and responsibilities.	Students demonstrate planning and collaborative skills.
3. Project Investigation	Students collected information through literature review, regulations, and organizational references relevant to educational institutions.	Students develop analytical and information literacy skills.
4. Project Development	Students prepared proposals describing school background, vision, mission, organizational structure, governance, and educational programs.	Students integrate organizational theory into practical organizational design.
5. Project Presentation	Each group presented its proposal and received feedback from lecturers and peers.	Students improve communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.
6. Reflection and Evaluation	Lecturers and students reflected on project implementation, learning experiences, and achievement of learning objectives.	Students strengthen Self-Directed Learning and reflective thinking.

The effectiveness of the implementation was documented through classroom observations, students' project products, presentation activities, and lecturer reflections conducted throughout the semester. These sources were used to describe how Project-Based Learning encouraged students to become more active in identifying problems, exploring learning resources independently, collaborating with peers, and developing organizational solutions. Rather than measuring statistical outcomes, this article emphasizes the instructional process and the practical experiences gained from implementing Project-Based Learning in stimulating students' Self-Directed Learning.

Figure 1. Flow of Best Practice Implementation



RESULT

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the Organizational Theory course was conducted through a series of structured learning activities designed to encourage students' active participation and stimulate Self-Directed Learning (SDL). Learning activities were carried out through face-to-face classroom meetings supported by the Learning Management System (LMS) of Universitas Jambi. Students accessed lecture materials, assignment guidelines, and supporting learning resources through the LMS, while classroom meetings were used for discussion, project supervision, and presentation activities.

The Organizational Theory course covers fundamental concepts of educational organizations, including organizational behavior, organizational structure, organizational design, educational governance, leadership, and organizational culture. To bridge theoretical understanding with authentic educational practice, students were assigned to develop a proposal for establishing an educational institution as the primary project throughout the semester. The project was completed collaboratively by **30 students** organized into **10 groups**, with each group consisting of three students. This project required students to integrate theoretical concepts with practical organizational planning.

Table 4. Components of the Project Assignment

Component	Description
Background	Identification of educational needs and rationale for establishing the school
Vision, Mission, and Goals	Formulation of institutional direction and educational objectives

Organizational Structure	Design of organizational hierarchy and division of responsibilities
School Governance	Description of management and administrative procedures
Educational Programs	Development of academic and supporting school programs

The implementation of Project-Based Learning began with introducing authentic educational cases related to the establishment and management of educational institutions. Students worked collaboratively to analyze organizational problems, identify educational needs, collect supporting references, and formulate organizational solutions. During project development, lecturers acted primarily as facilitators by providing consultation, monitoring project progress, encouraging group discussions, and offering formative feedback.

Students demonstrated increasing participation throughout project implementation. Initially, most students depended heavily on lecturer explanations when completing assignments. However, as project activities progressed, students became more active in searching for scientific references, discussing organizational concepts, dividing responsibilities among group members, and independently solving organizational problems encountered during proposal development. This learning process reflects the characteristics of Self-Directed Learning, in which students gradually assume responsibility for planning, implementing, and evaluating their own learning activities (Isnaini et al., 2019; Gibbons, 2002).

Table 5. Learning Activities and Development of Self-Directed Learning

Learning Activities	**Observed Student Behaviors**	**SDL Competencies Developed**
Literature exploration	Students independently searched books, journal articles, and educational regulations	Information literacy
Group discussion	Students collaboratively identified organizational problems and formulated solutions	Collaboration and communication
Proposal preparation	Students independently developed organizational documents	Planning and responsibility
Lecturer consultation	Students requested feedback and revised project outputs	Reflection and continuous improvement
Project presentation	Students defended ideas and responded to questions	Confidence and critical thinking

The completed projects demonstrated that students were able to apply Organizational Theory concepts to authentic educational contexts. Each group successfully produced a proposal describing the rationale for establishing an educational institution, institutional vision and mission, organizational structure, governance mechanisms, and educational programs. These products indicate that students were not merely memorizing theoretical concepts but were capable of applying organizational principles in solving educational management problems.

The implementation of Project-Based Learning also provided opportunities for students to develop collaboration, communication, leadership, and decision-making skills. Throughout project implementation, students negotiated responsibilities, managed project timelines, evaluated group progress, and presented their work before lecturers and peers.

Such activities encouraged students to become active participants in the learning process rather than passive recipients of information.

The findings of this best practice indicate that integrating Project-Based Learning with the Organizational Theory course creates an authentic learning environment that supports the development of Self-Directed Learning. Students gradually became more independent in identifying learning needs, searching for relevant information, organizing project activities, evaluating their own work, and constructing organizational knowledge collaboratively. These observations are consistent with the characteristics of Self-Directed Learning described by Gibbons (2002), who emphasized learners' responsibility in planning, implementing, and evaluating learning activities, as well as by Permatasari and Anggryani (2021), who highlighted SDL as a process of managing cognitive and affective learning activities.

DISCUSSION

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) in the Organizational Theory course demonstrates that authentic project activities can create learning environments that encourage students to become more active, responsible, and independent throughout the learning process. Unlike conventional lecture-centered instruction, PjBL requires students to identify organizational problems, search for relevant learning resources, collaborate with peers, formulate organizational solutions, and present project outcomes. These learning activities gradually shifted students' roles from passive recipients of information to active constructors of knowledge.

The findings indicate that the project assignment enabled students to integrate theoretical concepts of organizational structure, organizational culture, organizational governance, and organizational design into authentic educational contexts. Through the development of school establishment proposals, students were required to analyze organizational needs, formulate institutional goals, design organizational structures, and develop educational programs. This authentic learning experience demonstrates that Project-Based Learning facilitates the application of theoretical knowledge to practical organizational problems, thereby strengthening conceptual understanding while simultaneously developing professional competencies required by future educational administrators.

These findings are consistent with the view that learning is fundamentally a process of knowledge construction rather than knowledge transmission. Students actively reconstructed organizational concepts through investigation, discussion, analysis, and project development instead of merely memorizing theoretical materials. Such learning experiences support the constructivist perspective that meaningful learning occurs when students actively participate in solving authentic problems and constructing their own understanding (Isnaini et al., 2019).

The implementation of Project-Based Learning also stimulated the development of Self-Directed Learning (SDL). During project implementation, students independently searched for scientific references, managed project schedules, distributed responsibilities among group members, evaluated project progress, and revised their work based on lecturer and peer feedback. These activities reflect the essential characteristics of Self-Directed Learning, namely planning learning activities, selecting learning strategies, monitoring progress, solving learning problems, and evaluating learning outcomes independently (Gibbons, 2002). Likewise, Permatasari and Anggryani (2021) emphasized that SDL encourages learners to regulate cognitive and affective learning processes, enabling students to become more responsible for achieving learning objectives.

Another important finding concerns the development of collaborative competence. Although Self-Directed Learning emphasizes learner autonomy, project implementation

demonstrated that independent learning does not occur in isolation. Students continuously interacted with peers, negotiated responsibilities, exchanged ideas, and solved organizational problems collaboratively. This finding suggests that Project-Based Learning simultaneously develops individual autonomy and collaborative learning competencies, both of which are essential for educational administrators who will later work within organizational systems requiring teamwork and collective decision-making.

The role of lecturers also changed substantially throughout Project-Based Learning implementation. Rather than functioning primarily as knowledge transmitters, lecturers acted as facilitators who guided discussions, monitored project progress, provided formative feedback, and encouraged students to reflect upon their learning experiences. This transformation supports contemporary higher education paradigms emphasizing student-centered learning, where lecturers create learning environments that encourage students to become independent learners capable of constructing knowledge autonomously.

The findings of this best practice are consistent with previous studies reporting the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in higher education. Patmanthara (2016) reported that Project-Based Learning improves students' learning activities and learning outcomes through authentic project experiences. Similarly, Rati et al. (2017) concluded that Project-Based Learning promotes creativity, student engagement, collaborative learning, and meaningful knowledge construction. The present study extends these findings by demonstrating that the implementation of Project-Based Learning in an Organizational Theory course also contributes to stimulating students' Self-Directed Learning through authentic organizational project activities. The present findings are also consistent with Guo et al. (2020), who reported that Project-Based Learning improves student engagement, collaborative competence, and learning autonomy in higher education. Likewise, Admiraal et al. (2026) demonstrated that collaborative project-based learning enhances students' motivation, teamwork, and perceived learning outcomes. These studies strengthen the practical evidence that authentic project activities encourage students to become more self-directed learners.

Compared with previous studies, this article offers a different perspective because the implementation was conducted within the context of the Organizational Theory course in an Educational Administration Study Program. Most previous studies have examined Project-Based Learning in science, engineering, vocational education, or mathematics. In contrast, this best practice demonstrates that Project-Based Learning is equally applicable to organizational and management-oriented courses that require students to analyze educational organizations and formulate managerial solutions. This context-specific implementation enriches the existing literature on student-centered learning in Educational Administration.

From a practical perspective, the implementation of Project-Based Learning provides several implications for higher education. First, authentic organizational projects encourage students to connect theoretical knowledge with professional practice. Second, collaborative project activities strengthen communication, leadership, and teamwork skills. Third, continuous reflection and formative feedback help students become more independent learners who are capable of evaluating and improving their own learning processes. Therefore, integrating Project-Based Learning into Organizational Theory courses can become an effective instructional strategy for preparing future educational administrators equipped with analytical, managerial, collaborative, and lifelong learning competencies.

Finally, this best practice demonstrates that Project-Based Learning is not merely an instructional method for improving academic achievement but also a pedagogical strategy

that fosters learning autonomy, responsibility, critical thinking, and organizational problem-solving. These competencies are increasingly important for Educational Administration graduates who will be expected to manage educational organizations within rapidly changing educational environments.

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of Project-Based Learning (PjBL) integrated with the Case Method in the Organizational Theory course proved to be an effective instructional strategy for stimulating students' Self-Directed Learning (SDL). Through authentic project activities, students demonstrated greater independence in identifying learning needs, exploring learning resources, collaborating with peers, solving organizational problems, and applying theoretical concepts to educational management practices. The project-based approach also strengthened students' critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and organizational analysis skills, which are essential competencies for prospective educational administrators.

This best practice highlights the importance of shifting from lecturer-centered instruction toward student-centered learning that provides authentic learning experiences and encourages students to become active constructors of knowledge. The findings contribute practical insights into the implementation of Project-Based Learning within Educational Administration and demonstrate its potential to strengthen both conceptual understanding and lifelong learning competencies.

It is recommended that future implementations expand project diversity, integrate digital learning technologies, and employ structured assessment rubrics to evaluate the development of Self-Directed Learning more comprehensively. Future studies may also combine best practice implementation with quantitative or mixed-method approaches to provide stronger empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning in higher education.

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