

Innovation in International Dance Learning through Experiential Learning: Integrating Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor Competencies in Higher Education

Restu Lanjari

Dance Education/Languages and Arts, Semarang State University, Indonesia
restulanjari1961@mail.unnes.ac.id

Hafid Zuhdan Bahtiar

Music Education/Languages and Arts, Semarang State University, Indonesia
hafidbahtiar@mail.unnes.ac.id

Antonius Edi Nugroho

Music Education/Languages and Arts, Semarang State University, Indonesia
nugroho87@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to examine the implementation of Experiential Learning in the teaching of International Dance in higher education and its impact on the development of student competencies. A mixed-methods approach combined a conceptual literature review with field studies through classroom observations and interviews. The literature review involved 35 academic articles from reputable international and national journals. At the same time, field data were collected from observations of four International Dance learning sessions and interviews with 10 students and two dance lecturers. The findings demonstrate that the Experiential Learning model is effective in enhancing students' cognitive competencies through a deeper understanding of dance theory, history, and aesthetics; affective competencies through increased motivation, artistic appreciation, and cultural sensitivity; and psychomotor competencies through improved technical mastery, improvisation, and expressive movement. Kolb's learning cycle, which consists of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, was successfully implemented in classroom dance practices. This study contributes theoretically by expanding the application of Experiential Learning in the field of dance education, which remains relatively underexplored, and practically by offering an innovative curriculum design that supports the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) policy and the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 on quality education. The findings highlight that experience-based dance learning is relevant for improving technical skills and crucial in shaping reflective, creative, and adaptive students capable of responding to global cultural dynamics.

Keywords: Experiential Learning; International Dance; Cognitive Competence; Affective Competence; Psychomotor Competence

Corresponding Author:

restulanjari1961@mail.unnes.ac.id

hafidbahtiar@mail.unnes.ac.id

nugroho87@mail.unnes.ac.id

INTRODUCTION

Higher education plays a vital role in preparing students not only to master theoretical knowledge but also to translate such knowledge into practical skills and meaningful aesthetic experiences. In dance education, particularly International Dance, overly theoretical teaching often limits students' ability to transform learning into functional and expressive forms. This phenomenon is reflected in students' lack of movement quality, shallow artistic appreciation, and limited emotional expression when engaging in dance learning.

In line with the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy and *Sustainable Development Goals* (SDG) 4 on Quality Education, there is an urgent need to develop innovative and holistic learning models. Such models should: 1) allow students to engage in authentic, real-life experiences; 2) integrate reflection as a crucial step in connecting experience with theory; 3) foster emotional and aesthetic sensitivity alongside motoric and physical skills; and ensure that learning activities go beyond "memorizing movements" to include cultural understanding, appreciation, creativity, and artistic expression.

David A. Kolb's theory of *Experiential Learning* provides a highly relevant conceptual framework, emphasizing that effective learning emerges through a cycle of experience, reflection, conceptualization, and active experimentation. From this perspective, concrete experience is the foundation for reflective observation, which leads to abstract conceptualization, followed by active experimentation that tests and applies new ideas in practice. Based on this framework, the present study poses the following research questions: (1) How can an *Experiential Learning*-based model be designed and implemented in teaching International Dance in higher education? (2) To what extent does this model enhance students'

cognitive competence in understanding the theory, history, and aesthetics of dance? (3) How does it influence their affective competence, particularly in motivation, artistic appreciation, and cultural awareness? and (4) How does it contribute to developing psychomotor competence, such as technical mastery, coordination, and expressive movement?

The objectives of this study are threefold: first, to describe the design and implementation of *Experiential Learning* in International Dance classes; second, to analyze its impact on students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains; and third, to propose an innovative, replicable learning model for higher education institutions. The novelty of this study lies in its contribution to dance education scholarship, particularly by emphasizing the integration of *Experiential Learning* into International Dance instruction. By bridging theory and practice, this research offers theoretical enrichment and practical insights for lecturers, institutions, and policymakers. Furthermore, it provides a model that addresses academic needs and aligns with national education reforms and global development goals.

LIETARTUR REVIEW

David A. Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* emphasizes that "learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." This model consists of four interconnected stages within a learning cycle: (1) **Concrete Experience**, where learners engage in direct, hands-on activities; (2) **Reflective Observation**, in which learners critically reflect on their experiences; (3) **Abstract Conceptualization**, where reflection leads to the development of ideas, concepts, and theoretical frameworks; and (4) **Active Experimentation**, in which learners test these concepts in real-life situations. Kolb also

identifies different learning styles – diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating – which highlight individual preferences but collectively reinforce the need for a complete learning cycle to achieve effective learning.

The application of *Experiential Learning* in arts education has shown significant benefits, particularly in dance. A study conducted at Yogyakarta State University demonstrated that integrating *Experiential Learning* with differentiated instruction enhanced creativity and conceptual understanding in dance creation courses. Similarly, research on **movement-based experiential learning in dance/movement therapy** confirmed the importance of direct experience in developing bodily awareness, movement control, and emotional expression among graduate students. In another study, a **community dance field trip** improved students' cultural understanding, aesthetic appreciation, and improvisational skills by engaging them directly in practice, reflection, and collaborative activities with local communities.

Dance education inherently requires the development of three domains of competence: 1) **Cognitive competence** includes understanding dance theories, historical contexts, aesthetics, and symbolic interpretations. Experiential approaches strengthen this by linking theoretical knowledge with practical and cultural contexts; 2) **Affective competence** refers to students' motivation, appreciation of art, emotional sensitivity, and artistic identity. Experiential methods nurture these attributes through direct engagement and reflective activities that foster a sense of belonging and deeper artistic appreciation; 3) **Psychomotor competence** covers technical movement skills, coordination, improvisation, and bodily expression. Studies have shown that repeated practice and active experimentation significantly enhance students' motor control, rhythm, and expressiveness.

Reflection serves as a crucial stage in the *Experiential Learning* cycle. Leijen et al. (2008) highlight the importance of pedagogical practices of reflection in tertiary dance education, including self-reflection, peer feedback, and guided reflection by instructors. These practices strengthen students' theoretical understanding and integrate affective and psychomotor learning by encouraging greater bodily awareness and artistic self-expression. Reflection thus acts as a bridge that connects concrete experience with abstract conceptualization, enabling students to refine their creative and cultural understanding while deepening their engagement with dance practice.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that *Experiential Learning* is highly relevant to dance education because it holistically integrates cognitive, affective, and psychomotor dimensions. Theories and empirical studies consistently indicate that direct experience, reflection, and experimentation are key to producing transformative learning in dance. However, there remains a limited number of studies focusing on International Dance within higher education, signaling a research gap that this study seeks to address.

METHODS

This study employed a **mixed-methods approach** by integrating a conceptual literature review with field research through classroom observations and interviews. This approach was chosen to comprehensively understand the application of *Experiential Learning* in International Dance instruction, combining theoretical insights with empirical evidence. The research design combined a **conceptual paper** based on a literature review and a **descriptive qualitative field study**. The strategy allowed the researcher to: (1) review academic literature to

build a conceptual framework and (2) verify and enrich these findings with empirical data obtained from classroom practices in dance education.

Two types of data were utilized: 1) **Primary Data:** Collected through **direct classroom observations** of International Dance lessons and **semi-structured interviews** with students and lecturers. Observations focused on the implementation of Kolb's learning cycle, while interviews explored participants' experiences, perceptions, and challenges in applying this model; 2) **Secondary Data:** Derived from academic literature, including international journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, national journals indexed in SINTA 1 and 2, educational books, and research reports published within the last five years, focusing on *Experiential Learning*, dance education, cognitive-affective-psychomotor competencies, MBKM, and SDG 4.

Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

1. **Literature Review:** Conducted using systematic searches in databases such as Google Scholar, DOAJ, Scopus, and Garuda, with keywords including *Experiential Learning*, *dance education*, *cognitive competence*, *affective competence*, *psychomotor competence*, *higher education*, and *SDG 4*.
2. **Observation:** Conducted during four International Dance classes using structured observation sheets that recorded students' participation in the stages of *Experiential Learning*.
3. **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Conducted with 10 students and two lecturers, guided by interview protocols based on indicators of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competence.
4. **Documentation:** Included syllabi, semester lesson plans (RPS), lecture notes, photos, and videos of classroom activities.

The inclusion criteria for literature selection were: (1) publications from the last five

years, (2) reputable peer-reviewed journals or academic books, (3) studies directly related to *Experiential Learning* or dance education, and (4) open-access availability. Exclusion criteria included non-peer-reviewed sources, popular articles, and irrelevant publications. The units of analysis included: 1) **Dance Students** as direct participants experiencing *Experiential Learning* in International Dance classes; 2) **Lecturers** as facilitators of dance instruction; 3) **Academic literature and documents are conceptual references that form the theoretical foundation** of this research.

Data were analyzed in three stages: 1) **Literature Analysis:** Using **narrative synthesis**, mapping literature findings to cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies and strategies for implementing *Experiential Learning*; 2) **Field Data Analysis:** Conducted through **thematic analysis**, grouping observation and interview results into key themes related to the effectiveness of experience-based learning; 3) **Triangulation:** Integrating literature findings with field data ensures validity and provides a comprehensive understanding of *Experiential Learning* in International Dance education.

RESULTS

1. Literature Review Findings

The review of 35 academic publications (25 international journals indexed in Scopus and WoS, and 10 national journals indexed in SINTA 1 and 2, published between 2019 and 2024) revealed that the application of *Experiential Learning* in arts education, particularly dance, has a significant impact on three domains: 1) **Cognitive domain:** Most studies reported that experiential approaches improved students' understanding of dance theory, history, and aesthetics. Students were better able to connect theoretical knowledge with practice and to

develop critical analytical skills; 2) **Affective domain:** *Experiential Learning* enhanced motivation, artistic appreciation, and cultural sensitivity, while also fostering self-confidence, collaboration, and creative identity; 3) **Psychomotor domain:** The model strengthened technical mastery and improvisation. Implementing Kolb's cycle—from concrete experience to active experimentation—improved coordination, movement accuracy, and expressive skills.

In addition, literature consistently highlights the alignment of *Experiential Learning* with 21st-century education reforms such as the *Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka* (MBKM) policy and SDG 4 on Quality Education, since the model emphasizes academic freedom and applied learning outcomes.

2. Classroom Observation Findings

Observations of four International Dance learning sessions at a higher education institution revealed the following patterns: 1) **Concrete Experience:** Students practiced dance movements from several countries (e.g., India, Japan, Korea) under lecturer guidance. Although enthusiasm was high, some students initially struggled with technical details; 2) **Reflective Observation:** Reflection sessions showed that students could articulate their experiences, including challenges in mastering movements and understanding the cultural meanings of the dances; 3) **Abstract Conceptualization:** Students connected their experiences with theories of aesthetics, symbolism, and cross-cultural differences in dance styles; 4) **Active Experimentation:** Students explored independent and group choreography, creating simple variations that demonstrated creativity and adaptability.

Overall, observations indicated increasing student engagement across sessions, particularly in reflection and creative exploration.

3. Interview Findings

Interviews with 10 students and two lecturers produced the following insights: 1) **Students** reported that experiential approaches helped them better understand dance holistically, rather than merely imitating movements. They felt more motivated, creative, and confident when performing; 2) **Lecturers** noted that while experiential teaching requires careful planning, particularly in facilitating student reflection, it is highly effective for improving dance learning outcomes and aligns with MBKM goals; 3)

4. Synthesis of Literature and Field Data

The synthesis of data confirmed the convergence between literature and field findings: 1) Literature validated the observed improvements in cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains; 2) Field observations demonstrated the practical enactment of Kolb's learning cycle within dance education; 3) Triangulation of literature and field data provided strong evidence that experiential approaches in International Dance education support both academic innovation and policy frameworks such as MBKM and SDG 4.

DISCUSSION

1. Alignment of Findings with Research Objectives

The findings of this study affirm that the application of *Experiential Learning* in International Dance instruction effectively enhances students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor competencies. These outcomes are consistent with the study's objectives: to describe the model's design and implementation, evaluate its impact on multiple learning domains, and propose an innovative framework for higher education.

2. Interpretation within the Theoretical Framework

Field observations demonstrated that Kolb's learning cycle, Concrete Experience, Reflective

Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation, was fully enacted in classroom practices. Concrete experiences, such as direct dance practice, triggered reflection, leading to theoretical conceptualization concerning aesthetics, cultural meanings, and movement structures. The final stage of active experimentation enabled students to create and adapt choreography, thereby integrating theoretical and practical knowledge. This process validates the relevance of Kolb's *Experiential Learning Theory* for arts and dance education.

3. Comparison with Previous Studies

The findings are consistent with prior research across diverse contexts. A study at Yogyakarta State University confirmed the effectiveness of *Experiential Learning* in fostering creativity in dance creation courses. Research in dance/movement therapy education highlighted how embodied experiences cultivate bodily awareness and emotional expression. Similarly, a community dance field trip study showed that experiential engagement significantly improved cultural appreciation, improvisational skills, and collaborative learning. This alignment underscores the universality of experiential approaches across various forms of dance education, including International Dance.

4. Scholarly Contribution

This study contributes to both theory and practice in dance education. Theoretically, it expands the application of *Experiential Learning* beyond management, science, and language studies into the relatively underexplored domain of dance education. Practically, it offers an innovative model that can guide lecturers and institutions in designing more interactive and transformative curricula, thereby supporting national policies such as MBKM and global agendas such as SDG 4.

5. Limitations of the Study

Several limitations should be acknowledged. First, field data were limited to one institution and a small number of classroom sessions, which constrains the generalizability of findings. Second, the interview sample size was relatively small, limiting the diversity of student experiences captured. Third, this study did not employ standardized quantitative measures to assess learning outcomes, which could have provided more objective evidence of competency development.

6. Implications and Recommendations

The study carries significant implications for practitioners, researchers, and policymakers. For practitioners, integrating *Experiential Learning* can serve as a core strategy in designing meaningful dance education curricula. For researchers, future studies could adopt broader mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to measure learning outcomes more systematically. For policymakers, incorporating *Experiential Learning* into MBKM programs can enhance the quality of arts education and strengthen its contribution to sustainable development, particularly through SDG 4.

CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that implementing Experiential Learning in International Dance education at the higher education level significantly contributes to developing students' competencies. Integrating literature review and field research confirms that Kolb's learning cycle, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, can be effectively applied in dance instruction. As a result, students not only gain theoretical understanding of dance (cognitive domain) but also enhance their artistic appreciation and motivation (affective domain), as well as their technical mastery and expressive abilities

(psychomotor domain). The main contribution of this study lies in affirming the relevance of Experiential Learning as an innovative model for dance education, particularly in International Dance. It offers theoretical enrichment for scholarship and practical guidance for lecturers and institutions. It supports national reforms such as Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) and global development agendas such as Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4 on quality education. Moreover, this study opens opportunities for further research with broader scopes and quantitative methods to assess learning outcomes objectively. Integrating Experiential Learning into dance education may serve as a key strategy in producing graduates who are not only technically skilled but also reflective, creative, and adaptive to global cultural dynamics.

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