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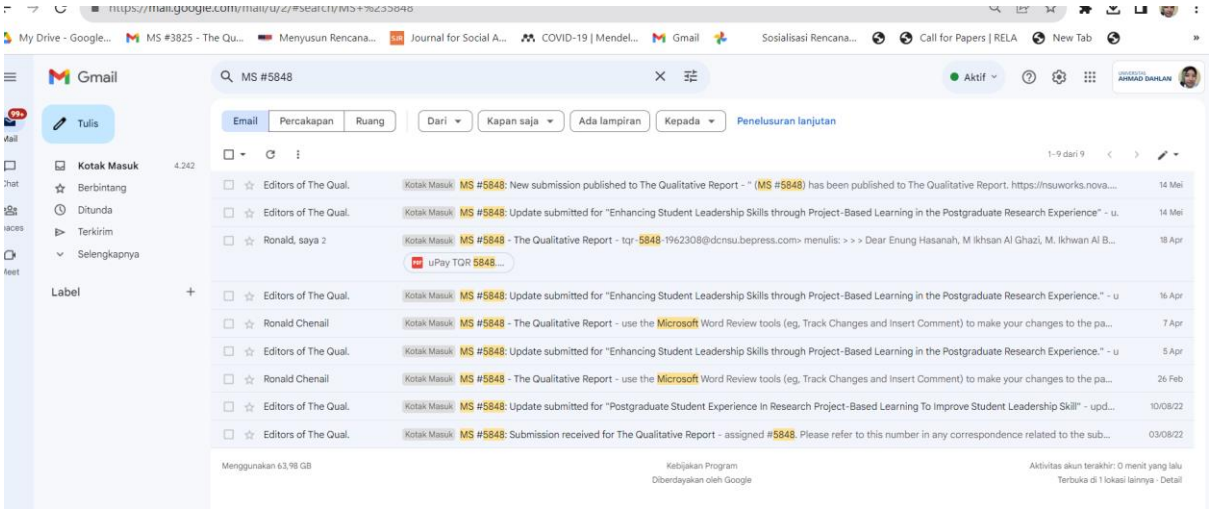


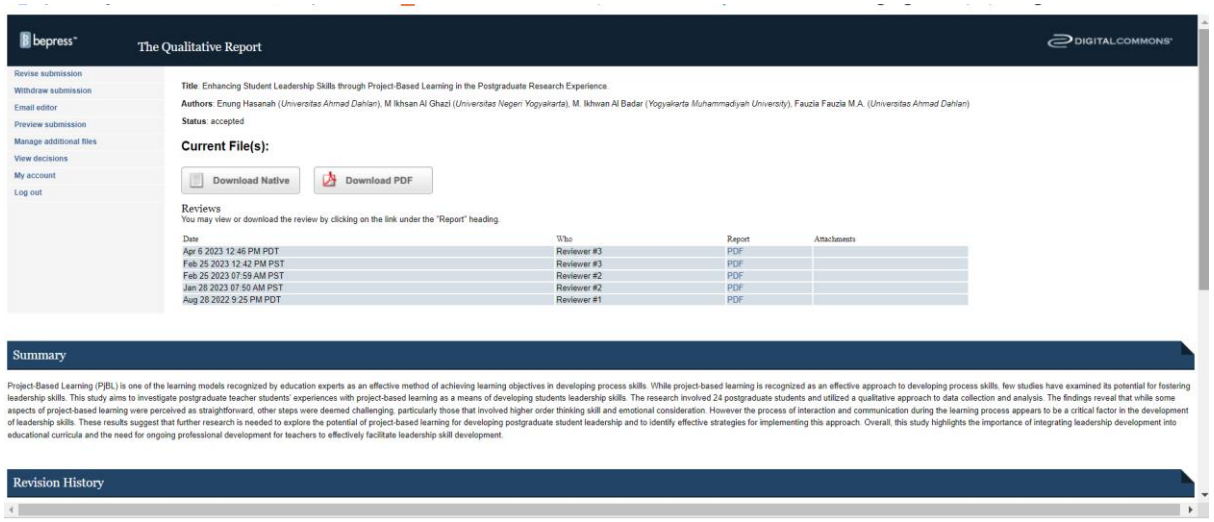


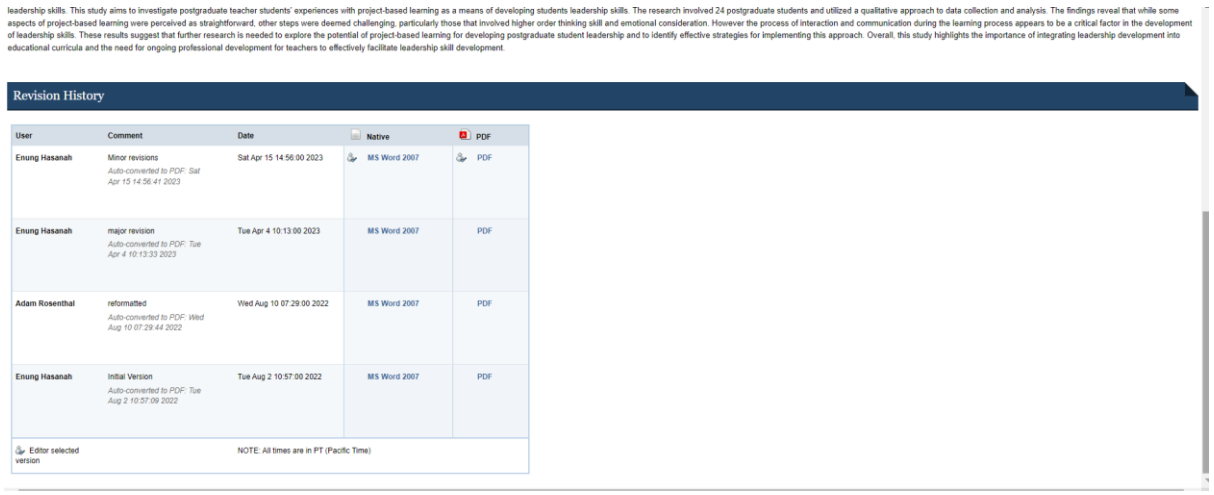

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Enung Hasanah <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>

# MS #5848: Submission received for The Qualitative Report

1 pesan

**Editors of The Qualitative Report** <editors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com> 3 Agustus 2022 pukul 00.57
Kepada: =?UTF-8?Q?=22Enung_Hasanah=22?= <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>
Cc: The Authors <authors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com>, The Editors <editors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com>

A new submission for The Qualitative Report has been uploaded by "Enung Hasanah" <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>.

The authors are:
"Enung Hasanah" <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>
"M Ikhsan Al Ghazi" <mikhsan.2020@student.uny.ac.id>
"M. Ikhwan Al Badar" <m.ikhwan.fpb20@mail.umy.ac.id>
"Fauzia Fauzia M.A." <fauzia@pbi.uad.ac.id>
The title is:
"Postgraduate Student Experience In Research Project-Based Learning
To Improve Student Leadership Skill"

The keywords are:
student leadership; research project-based learning; high-level
thinking skill; communication
The disciplines are:
Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies |
Social and Behavioral Sciences | Social Statistics

The submission has been assigned #5848. Please refer to this number in any correspondence related to the submission.

Authors may check the status of the submission, submit revisions, and contact editors via the following link:

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Thank you,

The Editors

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Enung Hasanah <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>

# MS #5848: Update submitted for "Postgraduate Student Experience In Research Project-Based Learning To Improve Student Leadership Skill"

1 pesan

**Editors of The Qualitative Report** <editors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com> 10 Agustus 2022 pukul 21.29
Kepada: =?UTF-8?Q?=22Enung_Hasanah=22?= <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>
Cc: The Authors <authors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com>, Assigned Editor <editor-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com>

This is an automatically-generated note to inform you that "Adam Rosenthal" <tqr@nova.edu> has submitted an update to MS #5848, "Postgraduate Student Experience In Research  Project-Based Learning To Improve Student Leadership Skill," in The Qualitative Report.

The reason for update is:
reformatted

The changes made are:

The authors are:
"Enung Hasanah" <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>
"M Ikhsan Al Ghazi" <mikhsan.2020@student.uny.ac.id>
"M. Ikhwan Al Badar" <m.ikhwan.fpb20@mail.umy.ac.id>
"Fauzia Fauzia M.A." <fauzia@pbi.uad.ac.id>

A preview of the title page and status may be viewed at:
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Thank you,

The Editors

The Qualitative Report

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Enung Hasanah <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>

# MS #5848 - The Qualitative Report

1 pesan

**Ronald Chenail** <editor-tqr-5848-1962308@dcnsu.bepress.com> 26 Februari 2023 pukul 03.44
Kepada: =?UTF-8?Q?=22Enung_Hasanah=22?= <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>
Cc: The Authors <authors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com>

Dear Enung Hasanah, M Ikhsan Al Ghazi, M. Ikhwan Al Badar, and Fauzia Fauzia M.A.,

Congratulations, your paper, “Postgraduate Student Experience In Research  Project-Based Learning To Improve Student Leadership Skill,” has been accepted into the Qualitative Report's Manuscript Development Program (MDP)! Your acceptance into this program means that the editorial team assigned to your paper has dedicated themselves to work with you to revise your manuscript until it is ready for publication in The Qualitative Report (TQR). As a result, when you successfully complete the MDP your completed paper will be published in TQR.

We have determined that revision of your article is necessary in order for your manuscript to be ready for publication. Although we are positive about your work's potential, we have also shared some important questions and concerns regarding your manuscript. We offer these comments in the spirit of helping you make your paper better.

Please see the attached Word file for our review and article mark up. Make sure you turn on the “All Markup” option in the Tracking Changes Options so you can see all our comments in your paper. The link to the page where the file is located can also be found at the end of the email. When you navigate from the email link to the page on the TQR website, please scroll down the page to find the hyperlink to the Word file with our comments and edits. Please do not use the “Native” or PDF versions to make your revisions.

Please use the attached Word file to review, revise, and resubmit your revised manuscript as soon as possible. If you choose to resubmit your manuscript, please use the "Revise Submission" option at the top of the page using the link below. Also, please work within the attached file and use the Microsoft Word Review tools (e.g., Track Changes and Insert Comment) to make your changes to the paper. This will allow us to readily see what steps you have taken to revise your paper. Additionally, please use the Insert Comment tool to address the questions and observations made by the reviewers. Lastly, if you have questions of your own, please add them to the paper using the Insert Comments feature.

Finally, we thank you again for submitting your paper to The Qualitative Report. Please let us know if you have any questions and once again, congratulations!

To submit your revision, please go to the following page:

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Thank you,

Ronald Chenail
Editor
The Qualitative Report

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# ~~Postgraduate Student Experience In Research Project-Based Learning To Improve Student Leadership Skill~~

# Unleashing Student Leadership: A Postgraduate Persepktive on Project-Based Learning Approach

Enung Hasanah, M Ikhsan Al Ghazi, M. Ikhwan Al Badar, and Fauzia Fauzia

**Abstract**

Project-based learning is one of the learning models recognized by education experts as an effective method of achieving learning objectives in developing process skills. Therefore, many teachers apply project-based learning methods, especially for exact subjects. However, not many studies discuss postgraduate teacher students' experiences regarding school leadership best practice lectures to develop student leadership skills. The research was conducted through a qualitative approach. Sources of data in this research amounted to 24 postgraduate students. The results of the study show that 1) in project research, there are activities that are considered easy by postgraduate students, namely learning steps that only apply what is already there; 2) The most challenging step in the project learning process is any activity that requires high-level thinking and considers the emotional stability of all group members in the research project; 3) The process of interaction and communication during the learning process has succeeded in helping to grow students' leadership skills. Further research on the process of developing postgraduate student leadership through the application of learning strategies is needed.

Keywords: student leadership; research project-based learning; high-level thinking skill; communication

**Commented [A2]:** Thank you for giving us this opportunity to read and review your paper! At The Qualitative Report we use the MS Word Comment feature to embed comments in a reviewed manuscript. You will see many comments that are offered with the intention of helping to strengthen the presentation of your ideas. They are related to what we believe is necessary to include in the publication of qualitative inquiry.

Ron Chenail
Editor-in-Chief
The Qualitative Report

**Commented [A3]:** The title can be made mode focused and less worded. It is a good idea to limit title to a maximum of 10 words.

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## Introduction

Leadership in educational institutions (Indriani & Hasanah, 2021) received a lot of attention because the leadership of teachers and principals directly or indirectly influences the quality of the education produced (Elsan Mansaray, 2019). Leadership significantly impacts the strategic management process, considerably helping define the vision and mission of the organization (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017; Priyambodo & Hasanah, 2021), as well as in the implementation process. Therefore, leadership courses must be developed in the teacher education curriculum (Egne, 2014).

Leadership education (Mazurkiewicz, 2021) is an educational process to build a scaffolding of attitudes, feelings, knowledge, and skills on moving others to want to work according to organizational goals voluntarily. Thus, lecturers need to develop learning strategies that are holistic, creative, and contextual so that lecturers can help develop student-teacher leadership skills (Osnovna & Gortan, 2016). To develop teacher-student leadership skills (Tatto, 2021), lecturers must be able to design instructions that can touch and move all components of students' self from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Guthrie et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021).

Ahmad Dahlan University Education Management Study Program, Indonesia (Hasanah et al., 2019), is one of the institutions that highly attach importance to developing student leadership skills. The UAD education management study program has one course dedicated to developing leadership skills, namely the school leadership best practice course. School leadership courses discuss the best practices of school/madrasah leadership that can produce various aspects of sustainable development of schools/madrasas/other educational institutions. Matters related to school leadership in healthy school management (transparency, accountability, resource control) (Muhtarom, 2015), Manajemen Perancanaan (Rajaloa & Hasyim, 2018), ~~Change~~ change management (Yusuf, 2008), ~~Conflict~~ conflict management (Egido Gálvez et al., 2016), internal and external quality assurance management (Hasanah, E., ; Purnawan, P.; Kuat, K., Hamidun, 2020), public relations management (Mukhtar et al., 2020), dan special service management (Wildan Zulkarnain, 2017) experienced in schools/madrasas that have successfully implemented them. Various experiences of successful schools/madrasahs in terms of leadership have been restructured so that they can be adapted and re-implemented by other work units to realize the quality of graduates, quality of teachers, quality of the learning process, and quality of school management that are following the real needs of the world of education in Indonesia contextually

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and actual (Agustang, 2021). Following the characteristics of this course, lectures are carried out on a practice-based basis, following the principles of outcome-based education (Katawazai, 2021; Rao, 2020).

One of the learning models identified by the learning principles of outcome-based education is project-based learning (Maryani et al., 2020). The project-based learning model (PjBL) is proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, student activity, and student creativity (Guo et al., 2020; Susanti et al., 2020; Winangun, 2021). Therefore, learning in leadership best practice courses is carried out through group project learning strategies. The learning approach used in this school leadership best practice course includes several characteristics of PjBLs. Research projects require successful group dynamics and long-term goal-oriented work, so research is needed on what students feel and experience during the student leadership development process. However, there is no adequate data regarding the real benefits felt by students in developing leadership skills through the project learning process.

In this study, we focus on implementing PjBL from a student perspective to explore student experiences of implementing project-based learning in developing leadership. This research is essential to produce a conceptual model as a result of constructing knowledge from project-based learning practices that have been carried out by postgraduate students in the faculty of teacher training and education.

This research question refers to the qualitative research process on project-based learning experiences conducted by Matilaenin et al. (2021), ~~(Matilainen et al., 2021)~~. This research was conducted by guiding the research questions as follows:

1. Which phase is the easiest to implement during the research project learning process?

2. Which phase was the most challenging to implement during the research project learning process?

3. What leadership skills can develop in students as a result of their participation in the learning of this project?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Project Based Learning

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**Commented [A15]:** The literature review intends to accomplish the following: (a) offer a synopsis of the current knowledge on your chosen topic in terms of content and research processes used, (b) demonstrat what gap exists in our knowledge both in terms of content and research methods, and (c) explain how your study is intended to fill that gap.

Please look at re-arranging this section in this format.

Project Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered teaching method based on the theory of constructivism and constructionism developed by Gergen, (1995), ; Piaget dan Inhelder (1969), and ; Vygotsky, (1978). The main objective behind developing this method is to create effective learning opportunities where learners can work collaboratively in groups to answer encouraging questions, solve problems, or overcome challenges with the aim of creating an end product. PBL is not limited to equipping students with content knowledge, but rather developing their psychomotor and social skills, such as seeking information from various sources, critical thinking, problem solving, self-evaluation, summarizing and giving presentations which are highly recommended for lifelong learning (Aldabbus, 2018). In other words, PBL educates all children rather than focusing on one aspect of learning.

Project-based learning (PjBL) has gained popularity and has been explored in various contexts and in different phases of schooling, from primary education to higher education. The idea of PjBL is to engage students in authentic problem investigations where solutions have the potential to be implemented and used in real life. Several benefits are associated with PjBL. The following three unique experiences for students include: (1) a sense of freedom to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss with colleagues; (2) the feeling of being able to influence the course of the learning process; and (3) the feeling of doing something that can be applied in practice (as well as contributing to teamwork). Other reported benefits of PjBL include developing metacognitive skills, such as self-regulation, co-regulation, and monitoring, as well as supporting independent learning (Hussein, 2021). To be able to realize project-based learning, it is necessary to pay attention to various challenges that come from the conditions of teachers and students, culture, and organization (Creely, 2018).

**Setting of research project learning in school leadership best practice courses**

**Commented [A16]:** How is this different from PjBL or is it? Please consistent with use of acronyms throughout.

**Commented [A17]:** Please throw more light on how PBL is linked to this theory.

**Commented [A18]:** Please clarify. Who developed which theory?

**Commented [A19]:** PjBL and PBL are 2 abbreviations used in the manuscript. Are these two same or different, is unclear. It is confusing the readers. Kindly clarify.

Leadership skill (Miasih & Hasanah, 2021), is a very important soft skill to be developed in learners, especially in education management masters education, where some of the students are teachers and principals. An educational process that can develop authentic student leadership, strengthen the characteristics of students to serve and support the people around them is not only good for students and their educational institutions, but also good for prospective organizations where graduates work and even good for their future. in front of our society (Kiersch & Peters, 2017). Therefore, in universities, it is necessary to add more attention to the development of student leadership, both through the implementation of various student--centered learning strategies (Acton, 2018), as well as through mentoring (Levy-Feldman, 2018). Students need to develop various leadership skills as important soft skills, including communication and organizational skills, public speaking skills, emotional intelligence (Hine, 2014; Mokshagundam et al., 2019), and student collaboration skills (Leskinen et al., 2021). All of these leadership skills become provisions for students when they graduate and return to the institution where they work.

The entire project learning process carried out in the leadership best practice course is as follows:

| Minggu (Sunday) | Kegiatan (Activity) | Tujuan pembelajaran (Learning Objectives) |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | • The lecturer explains the characteristics of the course and the learning objectives as well as the project learning method as a strategy that will be implemented by the students<br>• Students explore the concept of instructional leadership best practice and its relationship to the development of education policy in Indonesia regarding the profile of Pancasila students through group discussions.<br>• Reflection | Students have a complete understanding of the relationship between the concept of best practice leadership, and the concept of Pancasila students, instructional leadership. |
| 2 | • Students explore the role and function of leadership in schools in realizing the student profile of Pancasila.<br>• Lecturer lecture about design of the project learning activities and the themes of the research project that | Sstudents fully understand the project learning process plan and the expected final goals of the lecture. |

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| | each group should choose to answer the main research question: How is the instructional leadership model effective in realizing the Pancasila student profile?<br>• Reflection | |
| 3 | • The formation of groups, the selection of research themes for each group, as well as the selection of research locations in accordance with the criteria set by the lecturer.<br>• Criteria for the school where the research is located: Driving school that has implemented the Pancasila student development project learning<br>• reflection | Students are able to collaborate in groups and are able to make decisions.<br>Students are able to identify leadership problems that occur in schools and the best solutions to overcome these problems. |
| 4 | • Students design projects, formulate research questions, and arrange time schedules, and determine the output targets that will be produced by each group as lecture products. | Students are able to plan effective programs.<br>Students are able to produce a systematic work program design<br>Students are able to collaborate and communication in groups. |
| 5 | • Students conduct initial coordination with research partners and arrange research permits to schools. Noted: in Indonesia for research students to school enough research permission from the campus. | Students are able to collaborate and communication with parties outside the group. |
| 6-7 | • Students collect field data, and conduct online consultations with lecturers | ~~students~~ Students are able to identify things that are important in the process of developing a school. |
| UTS | • Summative test [a test of knowledge of instructional leadership and student profiles of Pancasila], and each student reports the role of each individual in his work group. | Students have an understanding of the concept of instructional leadership and have individual and group responsibilities. |
| 8 | Students carry out progress reports on all activities that have been carried out in the form of seminars in class. | Students have responsibility and are able to do self-evaluation. |

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| 9-10 | Students perform data analysis in groups | Students are able to communicate effectively orally and in writing |
| 11-12 | Students make a research project report using a template that has been set by the lecturer | Students are able to think at higher levels and doing collaboration |
| 13 | Lectures are carried out by presenting the principal to convey the experience of leading a school in order to realize the Pancasila student profile program, as a practical lecture | Students are able to think at higher levels |
| 14 | Students submit reports on group work orally in online meetings via zoom, followed by discussions and lecture reflections | Students are able to think at higher levels |
| UAS | Collection of group work reports<br>Individual reflection collection | Students are able to think at higher levels |

## METODE PENELITIAN (Research Methods)

This is phenomenological research (Hasanah & Supardi, 2020), exploring the phenomenon of project-based learning based on students' experiences. The phenomenological methodology allows researchers to explore complex phenomena in certain contexts (Rashid et al., 2019). We chose a place and research participants using purposive sampling (Jupp, 2015), namely the characteristics of the participants were students who directly experienced the process and learning outcomes through project-based learning in developing their leadership skills. The number of students in this study were 24 students. The data collection method is through in-depth individual interviews (Papke-Shields & Malhotra, 2001) with the participants. The data analysis process was carried out using the phenomenological analysis method, using the atlas.ti 9 application (Paulus et al., 2019). From the results of this data analysis, proceed to the data interpretation stage and matching with the applicable theory. The matching results show new findings regarding implementing effective project learning in developing student leadership. In general, the steps of phenomenological research can be seen in Figure 1 as follows:

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**Commented [A22]:** Before moving on to Methods we ask all authors to provide a brief discussion of their own context. This is based on a belief that who you are and how you are involved with the topic and study will influence the presentation. We want readers to have a fair understanding of the researcher to make the fullest evaluation of the study and to have greater confidence in what they are about to read. Toward that end, please tell us your relationship to this inquiry. Who are you? What is your interest in this topic? What is your investment in this project? What are your intentions?

**Commented [A23]:** We ask each of our authors to write their methods section in a stepwise fashion such that anyone else could use the same procedures/plan that you used. Therefore, I am suggesting that you reorganize this section to show your progression through data gathering and analysis. I am suggesting an outline below and each section should have an associated heading:

1. Please identify what type of qualitative inquiry you used. Give your rationale for selecting a qualitative design in general and your particular qualitative design choice in particular and discuss how these choices are appropriate to answering the question under study.
2. Include a full discussion of how your participants were identified and recruited. For studies on materials such as previously existing recordings or records, discuss how these data sources were selected.

**Commented [A24]:** You might consider taking a look at Moustakas' approach to support this more recent application of phenomenology.

**Commented [A25]:** Please provide a statement of third-party approval that you secured to conduct this study (e.g., Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human

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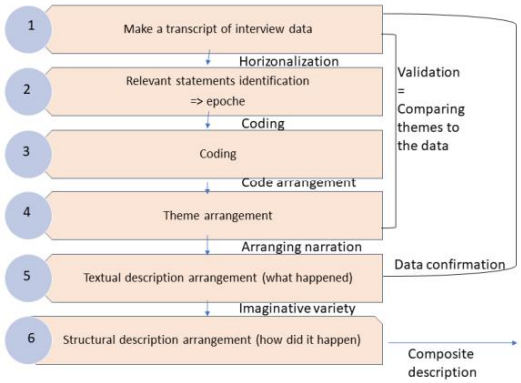


Figure 1. The steps of phenomenological data analysis (Hasanah & Supardi, 2020)

**Research Results**

Based on the results of data analysis, it is known that ~~3~~ three main topics can describe the experiences of postgraduate education management students in project-based learning in leadership best practice courses. The three themes are; the easiest phase, the hardest phase, and the leadership skills they felt as a result of the project activities. The research results are described as follows: **Theme 1. The easiest step According to the students' experience**

~~four~~ Four main things are easiest for students to do during the project learning process in the school leadership best practice course. The four activities can be seen in Figure 2 as follows:

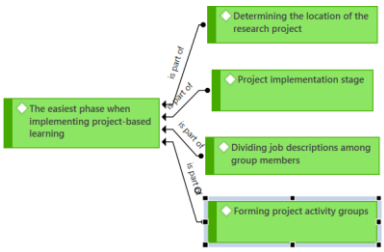


Figure 2. The easiest phase in project learning

Figure 2 shows that the easiest phase during the project leadership learning process is in the activities of forming project activity groups: group formation, selecting research project

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locations; division of job desks; project implementation. The explanation of these four things is as follows:

**Group formation**

In the project learning process, group formation is the first step that must be done by students. In this step, each student must find a partner to work on their project. For graduate students, this step is considered the easiest step. The following is a statement from one of the participants illustrates this sentiment:

> The easiest thing in the initial process of project learning is the step of forming a working group. We only need a moment to find friends who want to join the work group because all of us already know each other (P3, lines 6-9).

Another participant also stated the same thing that the group formation process was one of the easiest things. Below are the relevant statements of P15 as follows:

> I feel that the easiest step in the learning process of this project is in the early stages, namely in the group formation process because I already have a good relationship with my classmates. It was this good relationship that made it easy for me to find a work group (P15, lines 5-8).

**Choosing a research location**

One of the jobs that must be done by students in conducting research-based project learning is choosing a research location. According to postgraduate students, this is an easy thing because they already have good relationships and communication skills. The following is P13's explanation of this:

> The easiest thing in my opinion is to find/determine the object of the project, where educational institutions in Indonesia are very diverse, so choosing a place to be used as a project (in this case a school leadership best practice project) is quite easy, just how to communicate with related parties (P13, lines 7-9).

**Division of job descriptions among members**

The easy phase according to some participants was the job description division phase because all group members were adults and had an awareness of their respective tasks in the study group. The statement regarding this matter is as follows:

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**Commented [A30]:** For each finding, please make the three qualitative data analysis components clear:

For component one, **the quality**, please define what you mean by the finding. Without this definition, we don't know what you mean by your finding's qualities.

For component two, **the data**, please introduce the excerpt you suggest evidences the finding's quality. Without the data, we have no evidence upon which to judge your representations of the data's qualities. It is also important we know the source of the data.

For component three, **the analysis**, please explain how the data represents the qualities of which you claim it signifies because your analytical comments should bring the relationship between the quality asserted and the excerpt presented transparent and coherent making your qualitative claims clearly evidenced by the data. Without your testimony, the exhibit must speak for itself, which is not good practice in qualitative data analysis.

So, for each section, please first define the qualitative distinction being presented and then after each excerpt, please explain how you see the talk evidencing the qualities you claim it represents.

As you follow this three-step process, you might find you only need to use one example to evidence your qualitative assertions. Each example provided should be an exhibit for one or more quality analyzed, but listing a series of excerpts exhibiting the same quality does not contribute to the findings; the practice just makes the paper longer. If, however, there are many different qualities to be evidenced, then you should present one example per quality being asserted along with the data-supported analysis articulating each qualitative assertion.

**Commented [A31]:** Just as we ask that authors include evidence to support their qualitative data analysis results, we also ask authors to consider the value of using multiple excerpts for each qualitative distinction being presented in the paper. If a second quote exemplifies a qualitatively different aspect of your finding than the first exemplary quote presented for this particular finding, please make that distinction clear. If the subsequent quotes merely replicate evidential value of the initial quote for this the qualitative distinction, please only use the best piece of evidence. Having multiple quotes providing the same or similar qualitative evidence do not make your findings stronger, their insertion just makes your paper longer. To this end, please note where we have highlighted multiple quotes within sections and either explain each excerpt's unique qualitative difference that makes a difference given the finding you are attempting to evidence in the section or include only the best piece of evidence in your judgment

> We are postgraduate students who tend to have mature thoughts, each individual's work awareness is also high, so in our group, the most accessible phase is when we divide work tasks. Each member gets a task to support our research project's success, and all of them can commit to working together as a group. That is the most accessible phase in my experience (P21, rows 5-10).

P22 also submitted the relevant statement regarding this matter. In this case, P22 highlights that the division of tasks makes everything lighter.

**Commented [A32]:** Are three quotes needed here?

> Actually, the project that I did with our group was not easy, but because it was done together, each group member was aware of the importance of cooperation between members, so the work on this leadership course project became lighter, especially during the selection of group leader. , division of tasks for each group member and compiling reports according to the template prepared by the lecturer. That's easy (P22, lines 6-9).

P23 also states the same thing as P22, that the division of tasks is the easiest thing among all project phases that must be done by students. The following is the relevant statement from P23:

> The easiest phase is to determine the group and divide the tasks per group member, with the WhatsApp group, communication is more flexible, sometimes video calls in threes until 01.00 WIB in the morning. It turned out to be fun and exciting with this group assignment, a lot of experience per individual was gained as well as a better understanding and understanding of each other's situation (P23, lines 4-9).

**Project Implementation**

**Commented [A33]:** Refer to previous statement about using multiple quotes to illustrate the same point. Are all of these quotes necessary?

The project implementation session was perceived by the students as an easy part of the activity. The reason for the participants who said that project implementation was easy was because all they had to do was implement it, the preparations had been done thoroughly. Relevant statements regarding this matter were stated by P'17 as follows:

> The easiest phase of project assignment in my opinion is during project implementation with the children. Project implementation in our group is part of the data collection process. In that phase, all preparations have been done carefully the day before, so that implementation becomes easier (P17, lines 8-10).

P20 also states the same thing as what has been stated by P17 as follows:

> For me, the easiest phase is the project implementation phase, starting from the preparation of materials, division of tasks, documentation, and also data collection for the preparation of project activity reports. All of these activities are easy because all you have to do is carry out according to the plan and time schedule that has been mutually agreed upon between all group members, as well as an agreement between our group and the principal of the school where you are doing the research (P20, lines 6-10)

Another participant mentioned that the data collection phase as part of the project implementation phase was the easiest. The following is the statement of P 21 as follows:

> Another thing that became an easy phase for me was during data collection and meeting for the first time with resource persons. The first meeting is always fun, especially meeting resource persons who are communicative and able to present data both in the form of verbal and physical documents such as my group's resource person, Mrs. Menik Darmiyati, M.Pd. The phase of collecting and observing data for me as an extrovert is like a recharge energy and dragg back moment so that I am happy, interested, and really dazzling with that phase (P21, lines 13-20).

P22 also stated the same thing as the other participants regarding the phase that they thought was easy to do. Below is p22's statement regarding this matter:

> The easiest way is to conduct observations and interviews conducted in groups. Before conducting the interview, our group did the division of tasks among group members. In my opinion, due to careful preparation, the process of collecting data has become easy to do (P22, lines 11-16).

**Theme 2. The most challenging phase**

Based on the experiences of students during the project learning process in this school leadership course, there are ~~8~~ eight main activities as shown in Figure 3 below:

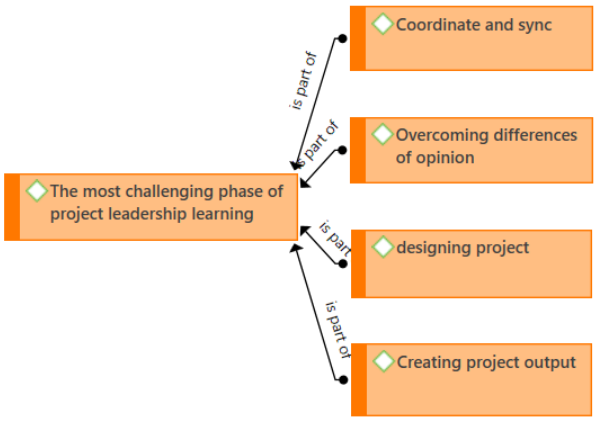


Figure 3. The most challenging phase of project learning

Commented [A34]: Good overview graphic to show your theme and sub-themes. I'm thinking you might want to present the sub-themes in the same order in which they are presented in the figure. That is, coordinate and sync, overcoming differences, etc. Also, as previously stated, please review the quotes and only present the exemplar quote that illustrates the theme/sub-theme. Only present multiple quotes when there are distinctions in the essence of the theme/sub-theme.

Designing project

Based on the narratives of the participants, the activity of designing project designs is the most challenging phase for students. The process of designing a design requires high-level thinking skills and also requires deep thinking. Below is the relevant statement regarding this matter:

> Among all the phases in the learning of this project I feel that the process of designing a project is the most challenging and difficult because all members of our group are officials in their respective schools so that our group must coordinate with personal time synchronization. Designing a design is not an easy thing, it requires a lot of knowledge and consideration so that it can be exactly according to the expected goals (P1, lines 56-68).

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Statement P1 is supported by several other statements, including the statement P7 as follows:

> This phase of the project flow is the most challenging and ummm…. [pause] I feel the difficulty is when designing the project, making decisions about what to do. This is because the design to achieve the objectives of the Pancasila student profile project that will be expected for students must be appropriate, while we also do not have experience preparing the project before (P7, lines 45-47)

P21 Also states the same thing that one of the phases which includes activities that are challenging and requires greater effort in project learning activities is when the earliest activity is at the stage of creating a project design. "I had a hard time planning the project design because it was something new and all of us in the group had never done that before" (P21, lines 40-42).

P24 also stated that designing the project was the most difficult thing in the learning process of this project. Below is P24's statement regarding this matter:

> The most difficult phase in the preparation of the project is to identify the ideas that will be used to design the project with various considerations of social conditions, culture, economy, demographics of the school environment. At this phase, I feel I really have to think hard so that the project I designed becomes the right project. This complexity is getting tougher because at the beginning of the lesson, in my group there are different points of view, so yeah… it's a bit long the discussion (P24, lines 39-45)

**Commented [A35]:** I second the suggestion above about whether you need multiple quotes that are all quite similar. However, if there are nuances in the quotes you'd like to bring forward, then their inclusion makes sense.

I also feel like it would be helpful to have a bit of a summary at the end of the section. What do you want readers to take away?

**Overcoming differences of opinion**

The participants stated that one part of challenging project-based learning activities is when there is a difference of opinion it is still difficult to find a solution. Below are some quotes from relevant participants about the difficulties of overcoming these differences of opinion.

> The part that has not been mastered while running this project is accepting different opinions, because my dominant character always wants to influence not be influenced, so it is quite difficult to find agreement (P3, lines 71-73).

P14 Also states the same thing regarding the difficulty of overcoming differences of opinion between members as follows:

> When we move from one schedule to the next, sometimes we disagree with each other. Usually each member has their own views and both do not want to give in, so sometimes there is a tough debate in the group. Although in the end there is a solution, but I feel it is something difficult (P14, lines 69-73).

**Commented [A36]:** According to Margarete Sandelowski's 2010 paper, "What's in a Name? Qualitative Description Revisited," "data never speak for themselves" (p. 79) so please explain to us how each excerpt supports your findings. To do so we ask that you first define the qualitative distinction are trying to convey in this section and then explain to us how this data bit evidences or illustrates your qualitative distinction. In other words, for each piece of potential evidence entered by you into the body of paper, we expect testimony on your part explaining or describing how these examples are supporting your assertions.

**Coordinating and synchronizing schedules**

In the condition of the COVID-19 pandemic, all human movement is limited, making the coordination process with teammates and resource persons something that requires great effort. Here are some relevant statements from participants:

> After I followed and we went through in making this project, I personally had difficulties in terms of coordination and synchronization, considering that each individual has various activities and activities, plus the distance is quite far, so meeting and completing this project is a bit of a challenge. , although it can still be solved with tremendous effort in our opinion (P12, lines 69-74).

P17 also said the same thing as his other colleagues that the coordination process with the resource persons was a very challenging thing. This is mainly due to the busyness of each, both members of the student group and the busyness of the resource persons who will be met by the students. Below is presented one of the relevant statements regarding this matter:

> The most difficult thing is to match the schedule with the resource person because of his busy teaching and work schedule. If the resource person is willing, the group members will also have activities. Signal sometimes also becomes an uncertain thing. But God willing, the shortcomings will be corrected in the future (P17, lines 70-74).

P24 also felt the same thing that the coordination process was not an easy thing, let alone coordinating with people from outside the group. P17's statement regarding this matter is as follows:

> According to my experience, the most difficult was when we met the head of the Yogyakarta MBS foundation, because before choosing MA Madania, the three of us had time to go to MBS Yogyakarta to do research at the school, but because the head of the foundation was difficult to find, the three of us finally chose MA Madania to be the best practice research with Entrepreneurship theme (P 24, lines 55-59)

**Compile project output**

According to the participants, one of the challenges in the project learning process was preparing the output because this process required foresight and the ability to interpret data, skills to create a product, and the ability to write reports. Below are some relevant statements made by the participants

> The most challenging phase in this project flow is the agreed product (output) manufacturing phase, namely video. I find this phase difficult because my competence related to making videos is still very limited. My video-making competence is still limited to the kinemaster application (P7, lines 23-26).

P11 also said that the process of preparing project outputs was very challenging because it required accuracy and synthesis skills. The following is P11's statement:

In my opinion, the most difficult challenge in the learning process of this project is re-exploring the data obtained and then synthesizing the data into a new science which is then poured into a report (P111, lines 25-27).

Another participant (P18) also shared his experience of a challenging phase in project learning that he had experienced:

The phase that I find difficult is concluding the results of observations and interviews to produce a pattern/model of leadership that has been developed by partner schools in the project we are doing. This process really requires higher-order thinking skills and broad insight into leadership so that we don't jump to conclusions (P18, lines 27-29).

**Theme 3. Developing student leadership skills**

Commented [A37]: Please refer to previous comments about order of presenting sub-themes and selection of exemplar quotes.

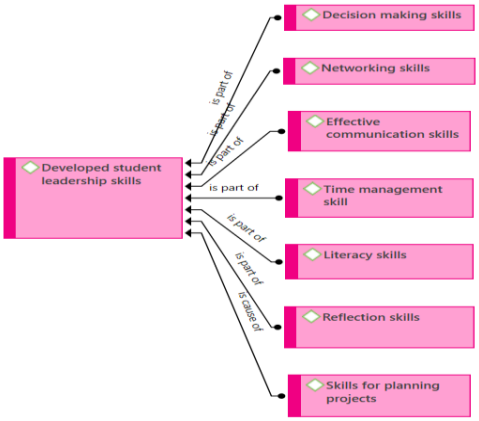


Figure 4. Theme 3. Developing student leadership skills

Figure 4 shows that the results of research project-based learning have succeeded in developing various leadership skills in students as follows:

**Skills to plan a program**

One of the leadership skills mastered by the participants after participating in project learning is the skill to plan a program more professionally. The participants admitted that through exploration, discussion, and discussion with all group members, the students

became aware of the procedures for preparing a thorough plan. Below is P1's statement regarding this matter:

> The initial process of project learning is to develop a design. In this process we conducted various information explorations related to matters related to the project topic that our group had chosen. With that process we have the skills to design a project carefully because it is accompanied by reading and working skills (P1, lines 91-94).

Another participant (P9) felt that project learning had succeeded in building his skills in understanding effective ways to design a program plan. The thing that was highlighted by P19 was that in this planning process, the lecturer provided broad opportunities for students to explore the data needed when planning. The following is P9's statement:

> I feel that by carrying out the lessons learned from this project, my skills to develop proper planning have improved. In the process of preparing the project design, students are given the freedom to explore various related information so that the compiled project becomes an appropriate and useful project (P9, lines 97-99).

**Effective communication skills**

In research project learning, each process requires communication between groups so that participants feel the practice of interacting and communicating directly with group members and partners where the project is implemented. The participants felt that learning this project could improve their practical communication skills from this activity. Below is Statement P13 as follows:

> The skills that I have understood and can put into practice as one of the leadership skills that have developed for me are the ability to communicate and coordinate, collaborate among friends, relate to other schools, learn about new government policies. This is a valuable experience for me (P 13, lines 86-89).

P19 also states the same thing as P13 as follows:

> All Learning Steps of this project require communication, coordination, and Cooperation skills. That's what I feel is quite developed in me as a result of the learning that I have followed for these 6 months. Even though we first encountered various obstacles, mainly due to differences of opinion, in the end our group was able to find a solution. I feel this process can develop my ability to communicate effectively with others (P19, lines 87-92)

**Time management skills**

Time management became a skill that was successfully developed as a self-skill of the participants through the learning of this project. The following are relevant statements regarding this matter:

> In the early days of college, sometimes I felt pressured to attend this leadership best practice course because I was very disciplined in terms of the use of time. Everything must be in accordance with the time schedule that has been designed, both online and offline, it's the same, it must be on time. Over time and thanks to real examples from lecturers, I finally felt accustomed to time discipline, I even practiced the discipline at the school where I worked (P15, lines 89-93).

P24 also feels the same way that with the sequence of work, this project has a better understanding of managing time when there is a lot of work to be done. P24 states as follows:

> I feel that through project learning in this school leadership best practice course, I have become more disciplined in carrying out various tasks because in this course, everything is very detailed and must be on schedule. Honestly, Ma'am, at first, I wouldn't say I liked this lecture because I felt it was too severe, let alone a matter of time, but after some time I enjoyed it more, and it turned out to be fun being a disciplined person, all work was completed on time, there was no work piled up (P24, lines 91-93).

**Literacy skills**

According to the participants, project learning has forced students to read and improve their reading skills because the whole process was checked and reviewed by the lecturer, given input and suggested to add materials. The following is P7's statement as follows:

> When I took this course in the form of riset project-based learning, I felt that my literacy about leadership had improved. This I got apart from the lecturer's explanation, I was also actively looking for information on effective leadership behavior as material for the group to design projects and also at the stage of analyzing and interpreting data on leadership (P7, lines 91-94).

P14 also said the same thing as P7 regarding his improved literacy skills:

> Riset project-based learning in the leadership best practice course which requires each group to produce measurable outputs and outcomes in the form of research reports and the final product in the form of published works has

> made me more active in conducting literacy about leadership. In the learning process in this course, my friends and I cannot write haphazardly because the lecturers always read our work and provide feedback (P14, lines 94-98).

**Networking skills**

Riset project work in groups and the obligation to have partners for project implementation has made participants have better networking skills. Below is the relevant statement from P8:

> Making projects in groups in this course has taught me many things, especially about the ability to collaborate with others and build networks to complete our projects. On the one hand, I also feel that my disciplinary abilities are developing because the lecturers always ask for troublesome progress about my role in the group, so I also have to take part in our group work seriously and actively. This pattern has succeeded in forcing me to be really active and disciplined in doing group assignments (P8, lines 95-101)

Another statement that corroborates the previous opinion, quoted from P10 as follows:

> Actually, I feel that many leadership skills have developed as a result of project learning in this leadership best practice course, such as the ability to plan, communicate, make decisions, collaborate and reflect on activities. Among the skills that most dominantly developed was my ability to build networks. This form of learning project must involve external parties in this project, so everyone must have a network, and in the end I know how to build a network at work as well as I can understand the tremendous benefits of this networking ability (P10, lines 91-96)

**Decision-making skills**

P1 emphasized that in the process of preparing the project design several options must be considered so that the project prepared is on target. Therefore, P1 felt that through this experience emerged the skills to make choices and make decisions quickly and accurately.

> In preparing the project design, many considerations were conveyed by each group member and used as choices. That's when I felt there was a thought process that forced me as the group leader to make the best decisions so that the project that was compiled became a good project. In addition to the preparation of the project plan, in other project steps, I am often faced with various choices that require me to make decisions. This has succeeded in building my ability to make the right decisions because the lecturers also always give directions and clues to find solutions (P1, lines 96-104).

P17 also felt that he had improved his decision-making ability through various activities in project learning.

> If I feel that through project learning in this best practice course, I will be more able to make the right decisions by considering various alternatives. During the project learning process, I encountered various activities that required students to choose and decide something (P17, lines 92-94).

Statement p17 is in line with statement P20 as follows:

> I feel that thanks to being often given various alternatives and having to make choices during this group project, I have come to know the best way to make the right decisions, namely by developing the ability to analyze from various points of view and stay in touch with relevant parties. In this case, I always communicate with the course lecturers and fellow members (P20, lines 95-99).

**Reflection skills**

According to the participants, students were always asked to reflect in each phase of the project's learning activities. This has succeeded in improving the reflection skills of the participants, as stated by P21 below.

> Every cycle in the learning activities of this project, we are always asked to reflect. The continuous practice of reflection makes me more able to do reflection to see what I've done, then I practice to find solutions to fix any shortcomings. In addition, I practice to find out the point of achievement of the program. This I feel is an extraordinary skill and I can do it (P21, lines 101-105).

Another participant (P22) also stated that the learning from this project had improved his ability to do self-evaluation and reflection because he was always asked to report on his role in his group.

> During research project learning in this leadership best practice course, we are always asked to evaluate and reflect, then arrange follow-up actions. In addition, there is a unique thing that I have just encountered in this course, which is that every time we meet, we are always asked to report on my role in my group. It has made me more responsible and able to judge myself (P22, lines 104-108)

**Discussion**

Of the three themes that were successfully compiled in this study, then analyzed from an educational point of view, the relationship between concepts and events in project learning as an effort to develop student skills can be seen in Figure 4 below:

**Commented [A38]:** Very well drafted section. Well done!

**Commented [A39]:** Please look at including the following as sub-sections:
1.Theoretical Implications
2. Practical Implications
3. Limitations of the study
4.Some future research directions.

**Commented [A40]:** What does an "educational point of view" mean?

**Commented [A41]:** Could you add some explanation of the figure? I was scrolling down a bit to see if you refer to it later, but didn't notice anything (unless it's down further than I scrolled).

**The key to successful project learning is intense communication and interaction between all parties involved in a group project**

The results of this study indicate that each process in learning research projects in groups requires communication skills and interactions between all parties involved, both lecturers and students, students and students, as well as students and partners in the project being carried out. The intensity communication between groups (Kuswanti et al., 2020), allows students to have direct social interaction with other group members. This interaction in the learning process has an important function in developing students' social skills (Siddiky, 2020).

The pattern of intense communication and interaction among all project group members is the key to the group's success in achieving the learning objectives that have been set. This is in line with several research results which show that communication is very important when someone works in a group, because good communication can overcome various problems of misunderstanding, find solutions to overcome differences in views, and to overcome various dynamics that occur in groups (Fischer-Grönlund et al., 2021; Rollins et al., 2020; Tropp et al.,

2021), so that it can be realized effective learning in realizing learning objectives (Visser et al., 2021). Group members can negotiate, coordinate, and collaborate smoothly through a communication pattern that both parties can accept, both the sender and the recipient of the message (Chen, 2021; Gai et al., 2021). The pattern of coordination and communication between participants represents the role that individuals play in group activities (Dowell et al., 2019), as well as being able to distinguish the learning outcomes of a learning process (Roldán-Álvarez et al., 2020).

The students highlighted the importance of feedback from lecturers during project implementation so that students better understand which targets have been achieved and which still need to be pursued and improved. Even though postgraduate students are adults, they still feel they need explanations and input from the lecturers to strengthen their understanding. This research shows that feedback from lecturers is essential in the learning process even though the learners are adult learners. The results of this study are in line with several previous research results, which state that feedback from teachers has a positive effect on the development of motivation, student activity, and student achievement (Gan et al., 2021; Han & Xu, 2020; Le, 2016; Panigrahi et al., 2018).

**Project learning can be a medium in the process of building leadership skills through the practice of managing emot**ions and higher-order thinking skills.

Leadership skills (Akhwaba et al., 2020), are one of the most important soft skills in the world of education. The results of this study indicate that the pedagogical method in the form of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), has the ability to develop student teacher leadership skills (Nacak et al., 2020), seperti planning projects skill (Hero & Lindfors, 2019), decision making skills (Valente et al., 2020), communication skills (Gratton & Erickson, 2007), Literacy skills (Kaeophanuek et al., 2019), Networking skills (Bruthers et al., 2021), and reflection skills (Guo et al., 2020).

The results of this study indicate that the process of developing leadership skills occurs in students when students interact and communicate directly with others, practice each step of learning in groups, and share responsibilities during the process of completing group assignments. In the process of implementing projects in groups, each member and group leader is required to be able to manage emotions and use high-level thinking skills. Thus, this study supports the findings

of previous research which states that project-based learning has the ability to utilize students' potential in soft skills. PjBL preparation (planning), implementation, commitment, and assessment techniques each have a significant positive impact on improving soft skills among students (Dogara et al., 2019, 2020). It is proven that project-based learning facilitates the growth of learners in acquiring these skills (Khamdun et al., 2021; Musa et al., 2012).

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Make sure that all references are cited and all citations are references. This is what differentiates a list of references from a bibliography.

Note the correct title of the journal is The Qualitative Report. Please correct within this list. Also, please go back and review each reference to make sure it complies with APA format. I noticed some errors in capitalization, for example. Some references are incomplete (not volume, issue, or page numbers). For example, see your first entry (Actor, 2018).

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# MS #5848 - The Qualitative Report

1 pesan

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Kepada: =?UTF-8?Q?=22Enung_Hasanah=22?= <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id>
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Dear Enung Hasanah, M Ikhsan Al Ghazi, M. Ikhwan Al Badar, and Fauzia Fauzia M.A.,

Congratulations! After careful review, your article "Enhancing Student Leadership Skills through Project-Based Learning in the Postgraduate Research Experience." has been accepted into The Qualitative Report with minor changes. We look forward to publishing your article as soon as possible.

We have determined that minor revision of your article is necessary in order for your manuscript to be ready for publication. Please see the attached Word file for our review and article mark up. Make sure you turn on the “All Markup” option in the Tracking Changes Options so you can see all our comments in your paper. The link to the page where the file is located can also be found at the end of the email. When you navigate from the email link to the page on the TQR website, please scroll down the page to find the hyperlink to the Word file with our comments and edits. Please do not use the “Native” or PDF versions to make your revisions.

Please use the attached Word file to review, revise, and resubmit your revised manuscript as soon as possible. If you choose to resubmit your manuscript, please use the "Revise Submission" option at the top of the page using the link below. Also, please work within the attached file and use the Microsoft Word Review tools (e.g., Track Changes and Insert Comment) to make your changes to the paper. This will allow us to readily see what steps you have taken to revise your paper. Additionally, please use the Insert Comment tool to address the questions and observations made by the reviewers. Lastly, if you have questions of your own, please add them to the paper using the Insert Comments feature.

Finally, we thank you again for submitting your paper to The Qualitative Report. Please let us know if you have any questions and once again, congratulations!

Thank you,

Ronald Chenail
Co-Editor-in-Chief
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# Enhancing Student Leadership Skills through Project-Based Learning in the Postgraduate Research Experience

**Enung Hasanah[1*], M Ikhsan Al Ghazy[2], M. Ikhwan Al Badar[3], and Fauzia Fauzia[1]**

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**Commented [A1]:** Thank you for your revised manuscript! We appreciate the work you have put into improving your paper! As you can see below, we still have some ways in which we would like you to enhance your paper. In revising your paper, please use the Comments tool to insert responses to our comments to let us know how you revised the text of the paper.

Thank you,

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## Abstract

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is one of the learning models recognized by education experts as an effective method of achieving learning objectives in developing process skills. While project-based learning is recognized as an effective approach to developing process skills, few studies have examined its potential for fostering leadership skills. This study aims to investigate postgraduate teacher students' experiences with project-based learning as a means of developing students leadership skills. The research involved 24 postgraduate students and utilized a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. The findings reveal that while some aspects of project-based learning were perceived as straightforward, other steps were deemed challenging, particularly those that involved higher order thinking skill and emotional consideration. However, the process of interaction and communication during the learning process appears to be a critical factor in the development of leadership skills. These results suggest that further research is needed to explore the potential of project-based learning for developing postgraduate student leadership and to identify effective strategies for implementing this approach. Overall, this study highlights the importance of integrating leadership development into educational curricula and the need for ongoing professional development for teachers to effectively facilitate leadership skill development.

Keywords: communication, high-level thinking skill, student leadership, project-based learning, qualitative method

## Introduction

Leadership in educational institutions (Indriani & Hasanah, 2021) received a lot of attention because the leadership of teachers and principals directly or indirectly influences the quality of the education produced (Elsan Mansaray, 2019). Leadership significantly impacts the strategic management process, considerably helping define the vision and mission of the organization (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017; Priyambodo & Hasanah, 2021), as well as in the implementation process. Therefore, leadership courses must be developed in the teacher education curriculum (Egne, 2014).

Leadership education (Mazurkiewicz, 2021) is an educational process to build a scaffolding of attitudes, feelings, knowledge, and skills on moving others to want to work according to organizational goals voluntarily. Thus, lecturers need to develop learning strategies that are holistic, creative, and contextual so that lecturers can help develop student-teacher leadership skills (Osnovna & Gortan, 2016). To develop teacher-student leadership skills (Tatto, 2021), lecturers must be able to design instructions that can touch and move all components of students' self from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Guthrie et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021).

The Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) is an Indonesian university that places great emphasis on nurturing the leadership abilities of its students. Within the UAD's education management program, there is a specific course dedicated to honing leadership skills, known as the School Leadership Best Practice course. This course delves into the most effective practices for school leadership that can contribute to the sustainable development of educational institutions in various aspects.

Various experiences of successful schools/madrasahs in terms of leadership have been restructured so that they can be adapted and re-implemented by other work units to realize the quality of graduates, quality of teachers, quality of the learning process, and quality of school management that are following the real needs of the world of education in Indonesia contextually and actualy (Heyward et al., 2011; Suryadarma & Jones, 2013). Following the characteristics of this course, lectures are carried out on a practice-based basis, following the principles of outcome-based education (Katawazai, 2021; Rao, 2020).

One of the learning models identified by the learning principles of outcome-based education is project-based learning (Maryani et al., 2020). The project-based learning model (PjBL) is proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, student activity, and student

creativity (Guo et al., 2020; Susanti et al., 2020; Winangun, 2021). Therefore, learning in leadership best practice courses is carried out through group project learning strategies. The learning approach used in this school leadership best practice course includes several characteristics of PjBL. Research projects require successful group dynamics and long-term goal-oriented work, so research is needed on what students feel and experience during the student leadership development process. However, there is no adequate data regarding the real benefits felt by students in developing leadership skills through the project learning process.

In this study, we focus on implementing PjBL from a student perspective to explore student experiences of implementing project-based learning in developing leadership. This research is essential to produce a conceptual model as a result of constructing knowledge from project-based learning practices that have been carried out by postgraduate students in the faculty of teacher training and education.

This research question refers to the qualitative research process on project-based learning experiences conducted by Matilaenin et al. (2021). This research was conducted by guiding the research questions as follows:

1. Which phase is the easiest to implement during the research project learning process?
2. Which phase was the most challenging to implement during the research project learning process?
3. What leadership skills can develop in students as a result of their participation in the learning of this project?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Project Based Learning

Project Based Learning (PjBL) is a student-centered teaching method based on the theory of constructivism , which was developed by John Dewey (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2015). The main objective behind developing this method is to create effective learning opportunities where learners can work collaboratively in groups to answer encouraging questions, solve problems, or overcome challenges with the aim of creating an end product. PjBL is not limited to equipping students with content knowledge, but rather developing their psychomotor and social skills, such as seeking information from various sources, critical thinking, problem solving, self-evaluation,

summarizing and giving presentations which are highly recommended for lifelong learning (Aldabbus, 2018). In other words, PjBL educates all children rather than focusing on one aspect of learning.

Project-based learning (PjBL) has gained popularity and has been explored in various contexts and in different phases of schooling, from primary education to higher education. The idea of PjBL is to engage students in authentic problem investigations where solutions have the potential to be implemented and used in real life. Several benefits are associated with PjBL. The following three unique experiences for students include: (1) a sense of freedom to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss with colleagues; (2) the feeling of being able to influence the course of the learning process; and (3) the feeling of doing something that can be applied in practice (as well as contributing to teamwork). Other reported benefits of PjBL include developing metacognitive skills, such as self-regulation, co-regulation, and monitoring, as well as supporting independent learning (Hussein, 2021). To be able to realize project-based learning, it is necessary to pay attention to various challenges that come from the conditions of teachers and students, culture, and organization (Creely, 2018).

**Setting of research project learning in school leadership best practice courses**

Leadership skill (Miasih & Hasanah, 2021), is a very important soft skill to be developed in learners, especially in education management masters education, where some of the students are teachers and principals. An educational process that can develop authentic student leadership, strengthen students' characteristics to serve and support the people around them, is not only beneficial for the students and their educational institutions but also for prospective organizations where graduates work, and even for their future in society (Kiersch & Peters, 2017). Therefore, in universities, it is necessary to add more attention to the development of student leadership, both through the implementation of various student-centered learning strategies (Acton, 2018), as well as through mentoring (Levy-Feldman, 2018). Students need to develop various leadership skills as important soft skills, including communication and organizational skills, public speaking skills, emotional intelligence (Hine, 2014; Mokshagundam et al., 2019), and student collaboration skills (Leskinen et al., 2021). All of these leadership skills become provisions for students when they graduate and return to the institution where they work.

There is a need to explore the impact of project-based learning on the development of leadership skills among post-graduate students. This research could focus on the ways in which

project- based learning promotes the development of leadership skills, as well as the long-term impact of these skills on post-graduate students' careers. There is a lack of understanding of how graduate student leadership develops; At the same time, it is clear that the project-learning process in postgraduate education is an essential factor in leadership development; there is a need to explore how the project-based learning process contributes to the development of leadership skills among graduate students. This research could focus on the role of personality traits, prior experiences, and other environmental factors in shaping the leadership development of graduate students. Overall, these are just a few potential areas of focus for research on the gap in our knowledge in terms of project-based learning and the need to develop post-graduate student leadership. By addressing these gaps, we can better understand how to support post-graduate students in developing the skills they need to become effective leaders in their fields.

In general, the project learning process carried out in the "school leadership best practice" course at the Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Master of Education Management during the odd semester of the 2021/2022 academic year is as follows:

Table 1. Learning Activities in the best practice of school leadership course.

| Week | Activity | Learning Objectives |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | • The lecturer elucidates the course's distinctive features and learning objectives alongside the project-based learning approach as a pedagogical strategy to be employed by the students.<br>• The students engage in group discussions to explore the concept of instructional leadership best practice and its relationship to the development of education policy in Indonesia, specifically regarding the profile of Pancasila students.<br>• The students are reflecting on the learning process | • The students have a comprehensive understanding of the best practices in school leadership learning as an effort to improve the instructional leadership skills of the students<br>• The students have a broad understanding of the importance of instructional leadership skills in realizing the Pancasila student profile in schools in Indonesia |
| 2 | • The students undertake an exploration of the role and function of leadership within schools, with the objective of realizing the student profile of Pancasila. | Students fully understand the project learning process plan and the expected final goals of the lecture. |

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| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | • The lecturer delivers a lecture on the design of project-based learning activities and the themes of research projects that each group is required to select in order to address the main research question: "How effective is the instructional leadership model in realizing the Pancasila student profile?"<br>• The students are reflecting on the learning process | |
| 3 | • The formation of groups, the selection of research themes for each group, as well as the selection of research locations in accordance with the criteria set by the lecturer.<br>• Criteria for the school where the research is located: Driving school that has implemented the Pancasila student development project learning<br>• reflection | • Students are able to collaborate in groups and are able to make decisions.<br>• Students are able to identify leadership problems that occur in schools and the best solutions to overcome these problems. |
| 4 | • Students design projects, formulate research questions, and arrange time schedules, and determine the output targets that will be produced by each group as lecture products. | Students are able to plan effective programs.<br>Students are able to produce a systematic work program design<br>Students are able to collaborate and communication in groups. |
| 5 | • Students conduct initial coordination with research partners and arrange research permits to schools. Noted: in Indonesia for research students to school enough research permission from the campus. | Students are able to collaborate and communication with parties outside the group. |
| 6-7 | • Students collect field data, and conduct online consultations with lecturers | Students are able to identify things that are important in the process of developing a school. |
| Midterm exam | • Summative test [a test of knowledge of instructional leadership and student profiles of Pancasila], and each student reports the role of each individual in his work group. | Students have an understanding of the concept of instructional leadership and have individual and group responsibilities. |
| 8 | Students carry out progress reports on all activities that have been carried out in the form of seminars in class. | Students have responsibility and are able to do self-evaluation. |
| 9-10 | Students perform data analysis in groups. | Students are able to communicate effectively orally and in writing. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 11-12 | Students make a research project report using a template that has been set by the lecturer. | Students are able to think at higher levels and doing collaboration. |
| 13 | Lectures are carried out by presenting the principal to convey the experience of leading a school in order to realize the Pancasila student profile program, as a practical lecture. | Students are able to think at higher levels. |
| 14 | Students submit reports on group work orally in online meetings via zoom, followed by discussions and lecture reflections. | Students are able to think at higher levels. |
| Final exams | Collection of group work reports<br>Individual reflection collection. | Students are able to think at higher levels. |

## Researcher Role

As researchers in the fields of education, social humanities, and cultural studies, our role in this research is to utilize our expertise and academic background to investigate the most effective learning strategies for developing student leadership in tertiary institutions. With our direct involvement in the learning process at Indonesian universities, we are particularly interested in producing graduates who possess strong leadership skills and can serve as valuable human resources in their respective fields.

## Research Methods

In our research, we adopted a constructivist approach, which acknowledges that a researcher cannot attain a definitive, singular reality, hence, comprehending a subject is subject to subjective interpretations that are built on individuals' experiences within cultural and historical boundaries (Creswell, 2013). By utilizing this methodology, we have obtained research findings that are more comprehensive compared to those gained using solely phenomenological methods with their particular outcomes. Thus, our research processes as a whole fall under the umbrella of qualitative research procedures (Creswell, 2014).

We chose a place and research participants using purposive sampling (Jupp, 2015), namely the characteristics of the participants were students who directly experienced the process and learning outcomes through project-based learning in developing their leadership skills. The number of students in this study was 24 students. The data collection method is through in-depth individual interviews (Papke-Shields & Malhotra, 2001) with the participants.

Upon completion of the school leadership best practice learning process in the Master of Education Management study program at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, a period of reflection is always undertaken to evaluate the process and learning outcomes. In light of our forthcoming research on the topic of student leadership, we have submitted a written request to examine the experiences of students within the Education Management study program as they develop their school leadership skills. As an educational research project involving human subjects, it is noteworthy that in our local context of Indonesia, third-party approval is not required to ensure the ethics, security, privacy, and confidentiality of participants. Nevertheless, we, as researchers, have obtained the necessary research permits from the universities where these students are enrolled. To guarantee ethical practices, security, privacy, and confidentiality for all participants, we have incorporated informed consent procedures detailing the research's execution and participants' rights during their involvement in the research (Simpson & Innes, 2020).

The data analysis process was carried out using the thematic analysis method of analysis, with the assistance of the Atlas.ti 9 application (Meier et al., 2008).. After completing the data analysis, the next step is to proceed to the data interpretation stage and match it with the applicable theory. The matching results show new findings regarding implementing effective project-based learning in developing student leadership. In general, the steps of the data analysis process can be seen in figure 1 as follows:

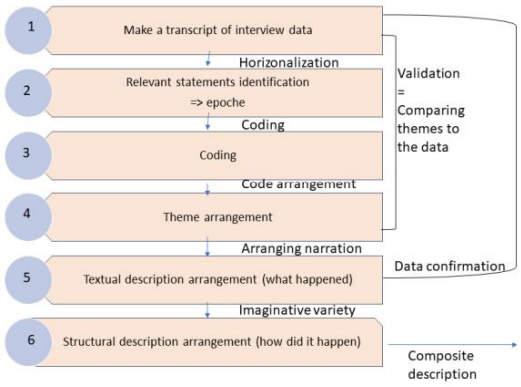


Figure 1. The steps of data analysis (Hasanah & Supardi, 2020)

According to the information presented in Figure 1, the process of analyzing the data can be described in the following manner:

1. Initially, we transcribed the data by utilizing the recordings of the in-depth interviews, and subsequently, we thoroughly reviewed the journal and field notes to obtain a more accurate understanding of the research context. Our use of journal and field notes was essential in ensuring the precision and reliability of the data.
2. Subsequently, a comprehensive investigation was carried out to isolate statements related to our research topic. Throughout this phase, we carefully examined the accounts of the participants, who effectively conveyed the fundamental essence of their experiences concerning the best practice leadership lecture process, and the leadership skills they perceived to have developed while following the various learning steps. The meticulous execution of the coding procedure involved a comprehensive analysis of each word in the transcript to apprehend its significance and identifying appropriate terms that represent the essence of the statement, in relation to the research context. Coding entails the discernment of pertinent meanings within each participant's statements, with reference to the research objectives and background. In essence, coding is a decision-making process, where the researcher utilizes the research methodology and background to make crucial decisions regarding coding elements such as conceptual similarity, statement meaning, and data size. It is essential to maintain an unbiased approach during coding by assuming that every participant's statement is of equal value, thereby assigning impartial meaning to all relevant data. The procedure for conducting coding is illustrated as follows:

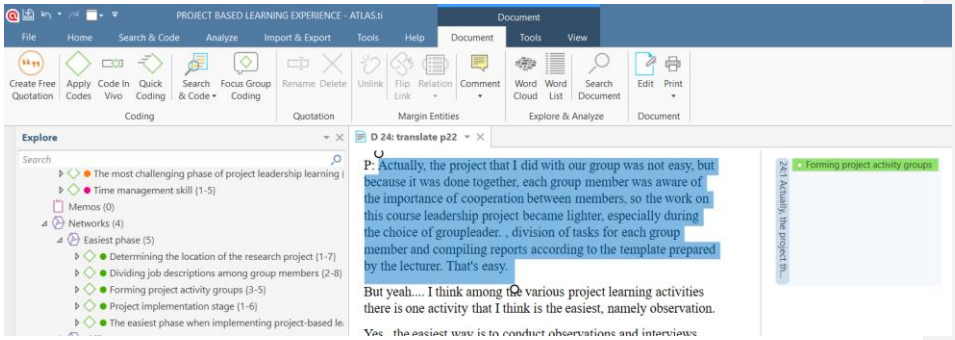


Figure 2. Coding process

3. Once all the transcripts had been encoded, a total of 23 codes were discovered, indicating the students' acquisition of leadership skills while engaging in project-based learning activities. Our subsequent task involves categorizing these codes into three distinct thematic groups: The easiest phase, the most challenging phase, and developing leadership skills.

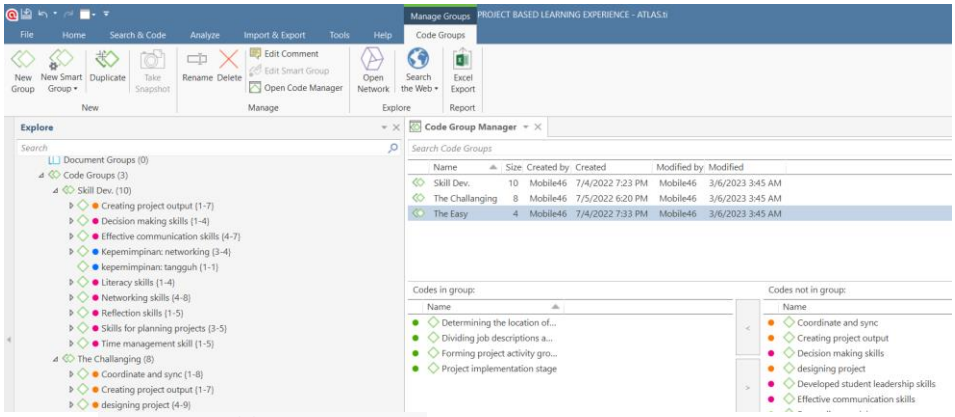


Figure 3. The process of forming the theme

4. The subsequent step entailed organizing the Individual Textural Description (ITD) whereby we utilized data obtained from the coded and themed transcribed in-depth interview recordings. To create the ITD, we commenced by interpreting the significance of each participant's encounters, a process that adhered to Moustakas' (1994) recommendation that researchers should meticulously examine every

participant's words or statements to unveil distinctive perspectives regarding the subject of study.

5. Following the successful construction of ITD for each participant, we proceeded to develop a Composite Textural Description (CTD) based on all the themes identified. Once the CTD was in place, we crafted a Structural Description (SD) that captured the "hidden" experiences perceived by the researchers, illustrating the "how" of the phenomenon to clarify the "what" of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).
6. In order to construct a comprehensive understanding of participant experiences, we merged CTD and CSD to form a Composite Textural-Structural Description (CTSD), which was analyzed repeatedly to extract the essence of the experience. During this process, we reviewed and re-identified all the themes and transcripts, and took into account the Javanese cultural context that serves as the backdrop for participants' lives. To obtain a complete understanding of the group, cultural context is essential. The results of our combined analysis are presented in the discussion section, demonstrating how project-based learning can enhance postgraduate students' leadership skills. Specifically, we found that effective communication and interaction between all parties is crucial for successful project learning, and that project learning can facilitate the development of leadership skills through the cultivation of emotional management and higher-order thinking abilities.

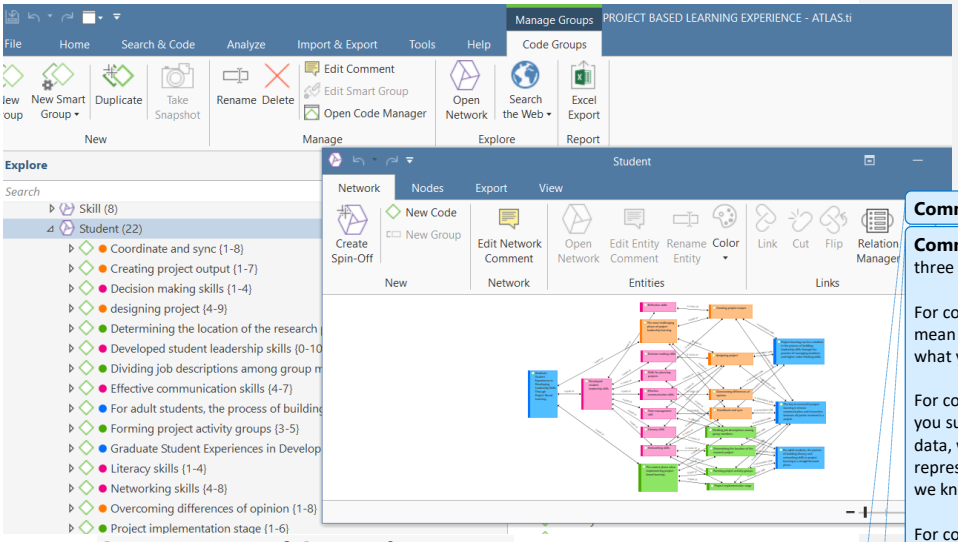


Figure 4. Composite Textural-Structural Description

## Findings

Based on the thematic analysis that we conducted on the views, feelings, and understanding of research-based learning practices in the Best Practice School Leadership course as a method in the process of developing student leadership, which was explicitly stated by the master's students in educational management that we interviewed, we found that the students assessed that the development of student leadership skills indeed needs to be trained through practice, not just emphasizing the reinforcement of knowledge about school leadership theories. Although there were participants that we gave pseudonyms who felt that research-based learning activities were quite tiring because they required a lot of physical and mental activities that were constantly monitored by the lecturer, especially through the process of self-reflection at the end of each class. Our themes referred to research questions about students' perspectives and feelings towards each coursework task they completed, ranging from activities that were deemed most challenging, the easiest work, and leadership values perceived to develop within the students as a result of completing the tasks in the course.

The research results are described as follows:

**Theme 1. The easiest step according to the students' activities**

The results of the data analysis indicate that for graduate students in educational management, there are four activities in the project-based learning process that are perceived as easy to carry out, namely: 1) determining the location of the research project; 2) project implementation stage; 3) dividing job descriptions among group members; and 4) forming project activity groups. These activities are illustrated in Figure 5 below:

**Commented [A3]:** Defining

**Commented [A4]:** For each finding, please make the three qualitative data analysis components clear:

For component one, **the quality**, please define what you mean by the finding. Without this definition, we don't know what you mean by your finding's qualities.

For component two, **the data**, please introduce the excerpt you suggest evidences the finding's quality. Without the data, we have no evidence upon which to judge your representations of the data's qualities. It is also important we know the source of the data.

For component three, **the analysis**, please explain how the data represents the qualities of which you claim it signifies because your analytical comments should bring the relationship between the quality asserted and the excerpt presented transparent and coherent making your qualitative claims clearly evidenced by the data. Without your testimony, the exhibit must speak for itself, which is not good practice in qualitative data analysis.

So, for each section, please first define the qualitative distinction being presented and then after each excerpt, please explain how you see the talk evidencing the qualities you claim it represents.

As you follow this three-step process, you might find you only need to use one example to evidence your qualitative assertions. Each example provided should be an exhibit for one or more quality analyzed, but listing a series of excerpts exhibiting the same quality does not contribute to the findings; the practice just makes the paper longer. If, however, there are many different qualities to be evidenced, then you should present one example per quality being asserted along with the data-supported analysis articulating each qualitative assertion.

To see a great example of this reporting style, please read and review the following paper:

Dix, N., Lail, A., Birnbaum, M., & Paris, J. (2020). Exploring the "at-risk" student label through the perspectives of higher education professionals. *The Qualitative Report*, *25*(11), 3830-3846. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2020.3371

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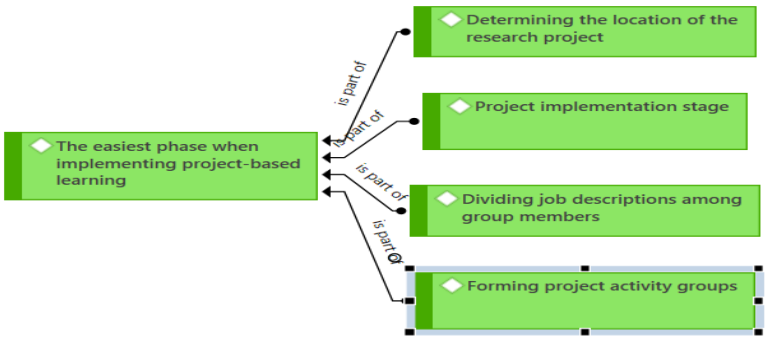


Figure 5. The easiest phase in project-based learning process

Figure 5 illustrates that there are four keywords indicating activities perceived as easy by postgraduate students in educational management during the research-based e-learning process, as follows:

**The process of forming a work group**.

Forming a work group in project-based learning constitutes a crucial phase in the planning and execution of a successful project. Therefore, students need to possess the ability to select appropriate partners to ensure effective collaboration within the team. Despite its perceived simplicity among master's students in educational management, this step remains a vital component of the project's overall success. The following statement from one of the participants is pertinent:

> The most straightforward aspect of the preliminary phase of project-based learning is the formation of a functional team. It only takes a brief moment to identify individuals who are interested in joining the group, as we are all already acquainted with one another (P3, lines 6-9).

According to P7, a student who also works as a school principal, Master's students have better academic maturity compared to undergraduate students. We have experience working in groups and a better understanding of how to communicate effectively with teammates skills. Master's students have more specific and high-quality skills compared to undergraduate students, which enables them to form effective work groups more easily. However, although Master's students may consider forming work groups an easy task, good effort and communication are still necessary to ensure that the group can work effectively and achieve desired goals.

**Choosing a research location**

One of the jobs that must be done by students in conducting project-based learning is choosing a research location. According to postgraduate students, this is an easy thing because they already have good relationships and communication skills. The following is P13's explanation of this:

> The easiest thing in my opinion is to find/determine the object of the project, where educational institutions in Indonesia are very diverse, so choosing a place to be used as a project (in this case a school leadership best practice project) is quite easy, just how to communicate with related parties (P13, lines 7-9).

The ease of choosing a research location in this project-based learning process seems to be related to the Javanese culture, which values friendship highly. Like the statement made by a participant with the code 9, who stated that choosing a research location in project-based learning can be a complex and challenging task. It requires careful consideration of various factors such as the availability of resources, access to data, expertise in the research area, and the relevance of the location to the research question. However, in their opinion, this task is easy because they have a friend who is a school principal, so it will be easy for them to obtain permission to conduct research there. As it is common in Java, once we know someone, dealing with matters becomes easier. As we often do in Java culture, it's easier to solve problems when we already know people involved. The most important thing is good communication.

**Division of job descriptions among members**

The easy phase according to some participants was the job description division phase because all group members were adults and had an awareness of their respective tasks in the study group. The statement regarding this matter is as follows:

> We are postgraduate students who tend to have mature thoughts, each individual's work awareness is also high, so in our group, the most accessible phase is when we divide work tasks. Each member gets a task to support our research project's success, and all of them can commit to working together as a group. That is the most accessible phase in my experience (P21, rows 5-10).

**Project Implementation**

The project implementation session was perceived by the students as an easy part of the activity. The reason for the participants who said that project implementation was easy was because all they had to do was implement it, the preparations had been done thoroughly. Relevant statements regarding this matter were stated by P'17 as follows:

> The easiest phase of project assignment in my opinion is during project implementation with the children. Project implementation in our group is part of the data collection process. In that phase, all preparations have been done carefully the day before, so that implementation becomes easier (P17, lines 8-10).

P20 also states the same thing as what has been stated by P17 as follows:

> For me, the easiest phase is the project implementation phase, starting from the preparation of materials, division of tasks, documentation, and also data collection for the preparation of project activity reports. All of these activities are easy because all you have to do is carry out according to the plan and time schedule that has been mutually agreed upon between all group members, as well as an agreement between our group and the principal of the school where you are doing the research (P20, lines 6-10)

**Theme 2. The most challenging phase**

Based on the experiences of students during the project learning process in this school leadership course, there are eight main activities as shown in Figure 3 below:

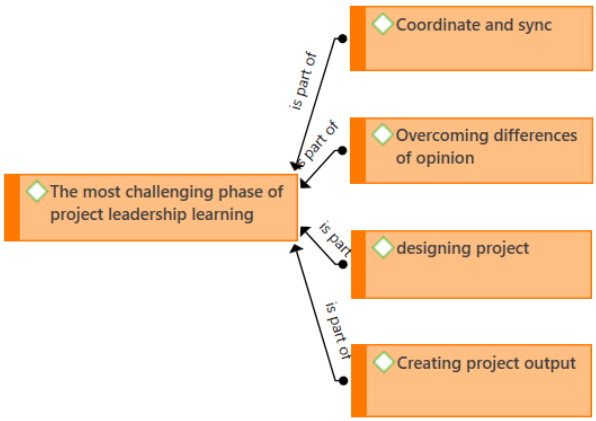

Figure 3. The most challenging phase of project learning

**Designing project**

Based on the narratives of the participants, the activity of designing project designs is the most challenging phase for students. The process of designing a design requires high-level thinking skills and also requires deep thinking. Below is the relevant statement regarding this matter:

> Among all the phases in the learning of this project I feel that the process of designing a project is the most challenging and difficult because all members of our group are officials in their respective schools so that our group must coordinate with personal time synchronization. Designing a design is not an easy thing, it requires a lot of knowledge and consideration so that it can be exactly according to the expected goals (P1, lines 56-68).

**Overcoming differences of opinion**

The participants stated that one part of challenging project-based learning activities is when there is a difference of opinion it is still difficult to find a solution. Below are some quotes from relevant participants about the difficulties of overcoming these differences of opinion.

> The part that has not been mastered while running this project is accepting different opinions, because my dominant character always wants to influence not be influenced, so it is quite difficult to find agreement (P3, lines 71-73).

P14 Also states the same thing regarding the difficulty of overcoming differences of opinion between members as follows:

> When we move from one schedule to the next, sometimes we disagree with each other. Usually each member has their own views and both do not want to give in, so sometimes there is a tough debate in the group. Although in the end there is a solution, but I feel it is something difficult (P14, lines 69-73).

**Coordinating and synchronizing schedules**

In the condition of the COVID-19 pandemic, all human movement is limited, making the coordination process with teammates and resource persons something that requires great effort. Here are some relevant statements from participants:

> After I followed and we went through in making this project, I personally had difficulties in terms of coordination and synchronization, considering that each individual has various activities and activities, plus the distance is quite far, so meeting and completing this project is a bit of a challenge. , although it can still be solved with tremendous effort in our opinion (P12, lines 69-74).

**Compile project output**

According to the participants, one of the challenges in the project learning process was preparing the output because this process required foresight and the ability to interpret data, skills to create a product, and the ability to write reports. Below are some relevant statements made by the participants

> The most challenging phase in this project flow is the agreed product (output) manufacturing phase, namely video. I find this phase difficult because my competence related to making videos is still very limited. My video-making competence is still limited to the kinemaster application (P7, lines 23-26).

P11 also said that the process of preparing project outputs was very challenging because it required accuracy and synthesis skills. The following is P11's statement:

> In my opinion, the most difficult challenge in the learning process of this project is re-exploring the data obtained and then synthesizing the data into a new science which is then poured into a report (P111, lines 25-27).

**Theme 3. Developing student leadership skills**

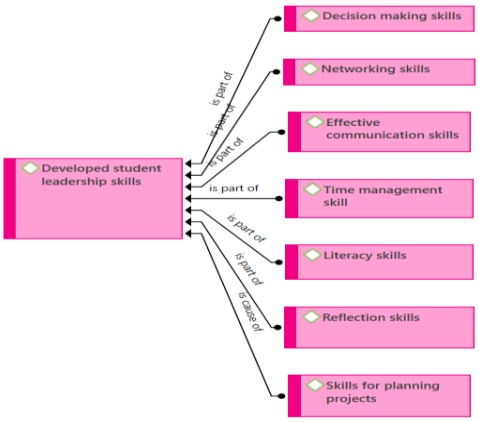


Figure 4. Theme 3. Developing student leadership skills

Figure 4 shows that the results of research project-based learning have succeeded in developing various leadership skills in students as follows:

**Skills to plan a program**

One of the leadership skills mastered by the participants after participating in project learning is the skill to plan a program more professionally. The participants admitted that through exploration, discussion, and discussion with all group members, the students became aware of the procedures for preparing a thorough plan. Below is P1's statement regarding this matter:

> The initial process of project learning is to develop a design. In this process we conducted various information explorations related to matters related to the project topic that our group had chosen. With that process we have the skills to design a project carefully because it is accompanied by reading and working skills (P1, lines 91-94).

**Effective communication skills**

In research project learning, each process requires communication between groups so that participants feel the practice of interacting and communicating directly with group members and partners where the project is implemented. The participants felt that learning this project could improve their practical communication skills from this activity. Below is Statement P13 as follows:

> The skills that I have understood and can put into practice as one of the leadership skills that have developed for me are the ability to communicate and coordinate,

> collaborate among friends, relate to other schools, learn about new government policies. This is a valuable experience for me (P 13, lines 86-89).

**Time management skills**

Time management became a skill that was successfully developed as a self-skill of the participants through the learning of this project. The following are relevant statements regarding this matter:

> In the early days of college, sometimes I felt pressured to attend this leadership best practice course because I was very disciplined in terms of the use of time. Everything must be in accordance with the time schedule that has been designed, both online and offline, it's the same, it must be on time. Over time and thanks to real examples from lecturers, I finally felt accustomed to time discipline, I even practiced the discipline at the school where I worked (P15, lines 89-93).

**Literacy skills**

According to the participants, project learning has forced students to read and improve their reading skills because the whole process was checked and reviewed by the lecturer, given input and suggested to add materials. The following is P7's statement as follows:

> When I took this course in the form of riset project-based learning, I felt that my literacy about leadership had improved. This I got apart from the lecturer's explanation, I was also actively looking for information on effective leadership behavior as material for the group to design projects and also at the stage of analyzing and interpreting data on leadership (P7, lines 91-94).

**Networking skills**

Riset project work in groups and the obligation to have partners for project implementation has made participants have better networking skills. Below is the relevant statement from P8:

> Making projects in groups in this course has taught me many things, especially about the ability to collaborate with others and build networks to complete our projects. On the one hand, I also feel that my disciplinary abilities are developing because the lecturers always ask for troublesome progress about my role in the group, so I also have to take part in our group work seriously and actively. This pattern has succeeded in forcing me to be really active and disciplined in doing group assignments (P8, lines 95-101)

Another statement that corroborates the previous opinion, quoted from P10 as follows:

> Actually, I feel that many leadership skills have developed as a result of project learning in this leadership best practice course, such as the ability to plan, communicate, make decisions, collaborate and reflect on activities. Among the skills that most dominantly developed was my ability to build networks. This form of learning project must involve external parties in this project, so everyone must have a network, and in the end I know how to build a network at work as well as I can understand the tremendous benefits of this networking ability (P10, lines 91-96)

**Decision-making skills**

P1 emphasized that in the process of preparing the project design several options must be considered so that the project prepared is on target. Therefore, P1 felt that through this experience emerged the skills to make choices and make decisions quickly and accurately.

> In preparing the project design, many considerations were conveyed by each group member and used as choices. That's when I felt there was a thought process that forced me as the group leader to make the best decisions so that the project that was compiled became a good project. In addition to the preparation of the project plan, in other project steps, I am often faced with various choices that require me to make decisions. This has succeeded in building my ability to make the right decisions because the lecturers also always give directions and clues to find solutions (P1, lines 96-104).

Participants 11 and 12 had the same opinion that during the project-based learning process, they were often faced with problems that required the ability to make decisions. These skills arise when each member communicates and exchanges opinions in assessing various alternative actions that might be taken. Good communication is critical to students' success in making the right decisions.

**Reflection skills**

According to the participants, students were always asked to reflect in each phase of the project's learning activities. This has succeeded in improving the reflection skills of the participants, as stated by P21 below.

> Every cycle in the learning activities of this project, we are always asked to reflect. The continuous practice of reflection makes me more able to do reflection to see what I've done, then I practice to find solutions to fix any shortcomings. In addition, I practice to find out the point of achievement of the program. This I feel is an extraordinary skill and I can do it (P21, lines 101-105).

## Discussion

The results of the in-depth analysis of the codes and themes in this research indicate that there are two essential aspects of the postgraduate students' experience in carrying out project-based learning and its relation to the process of developing leadership skills, namely: 1) Intense communication and interaction among all parties involved in a group project is the key to successful project-based learning; 2) Project-based learning can serve as a medium in the process of developing leadership skills through the practice of managing emotions and higher-order thinking skills. A conceptual model of the research findings can be seen in Figure 5 as follows:

Figure 5. The conceptual model for developing student leadership through project-based learning.

**The key to successful project learning is intense communication and interaction between all parties involved in a group project**

The results of this study indicate that each process in learning research projects in groups requires communication skills and interactions between all parties involved, both lecturers and students, students and students, as well as students and partners in the project being carried out. The intensity communication between groups (Kuswanti et al., 2020), allows students to have direct social interaction with other group members. This interaction in the learning process has an important function in developing students' social skills (Siddiky, 2020).

The pattern of intense communication and interaction among all project group members is the key to the group's success in achieving the learning objectives that have been set. This is in line with several research results which show that communication is very important when someone works in a group, because good communication can overcome various problems of misunderstanding, find solutions to overcome differences in views, and to overcome various dynamics that occur in groups (Fischer-Grönlund et al., 2021; Rollins et al., 2020; Tropp et al., 2021), so that it can be realized effective learning in realizing learning objectives (Visser et al., 2021). Group members can negotiate, coordinate, and collaborate smoothly through a communication pattern that both parties can accept, both the sender and the recipient of the message (Chen, 2021; Gai et al., 2021). The pattern of coordination and communication between participants represents the role that individuals play in group activities (Dowell et al., 2019), as well as being able to distinguish the learning outcomes of a learning process (Roldán-Álvarez et al., 2020).

The students highlighted the importance of feedback from lecturers during project implementation so that students better understand which targets have been achieved and which still need to be pursued and improved. Even though postgraduate students are adults, they still feel they need explanations and input from the lecturers to strengthen their understanding. This research shows that feedback from lecturers is essential in the learning process even though the learners are adult learners. The results of this study are in line with several previous research results, which state that feedback from teachers has a positive effect on the development of motivation, student activity, and student achievement (Gan et al., 2021; Han & Xu, 2020; Le, 2016; Panigrahi et al., 2018).

**Project-based learning can be a medium in the process of building leadership skills through the practice of managing emot**ions and higher-order thinking skills.

Leadership skills (Akhwaba et al., 2020), are one of the most important soft skills in the world of education. The results of this study indicate that the pedagogical method in the form of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), has the ability to develop student teacher leadership skills (Nacak et al., 2020), seperti planning projects skill (Hero & Lindfors, 2019), decision making skills (Valente et al., 2020), communication skills (Gratton & Erickson, 2007), Literacy skills (Kaeophanuek et al., 2019), Networking skills (Bruthers et al., 2021), and reflection skills (Guo et al., 2020).

The results of this study indicate that the process of developing leadership skills occurs in students when students interact and communicate directly with others, practice each step of learning in groups, and share responsibilities during the process of completing group assignments. In the process of implementing projects in groups, each member and group leader is required to be able to manage emotions and use high-level thinking skills. Thus, this study supports the findings of previous research which states that project-based learning has the ability to utilize students' potential in soft skills. PjBL preparation (planning), implementation, commitment, and assessment techniques each have a significant positive impact on improving soft skills among students (Dogara et al., 2019, 2020). It is proven that project-based learning facilitates the growth of learners in acquiring these skills (Khamdun et al., 2021; Musa et al., 2012).

Theoretical implications from this research suggest that project-based learning is an effective method for developing process skills and has potential for fostering leadership skills in postgraduate teacher students. However, the study also reveals that the process of interaction and communication during the learning process is critical in developing leadership skills, and that effective strategies for implementing project-based learning for leadership skill development need to be identified. These findings underscore the importance of integrating leadership development into educational curricula and providing ongoing professional development for teachers to facilitate leadership skill development. Future research could explore the potential of project-based learning for developing leadership skills in different contexts and populations and investigate effective approaches for integrating leadership development into educational programs.

The practical implications of this research result are significant for both postgraduate teacher students and educators. Firstly, the study provides evidence that project-based learning is a potentially effective approach for developing leadership skills in students. This information is valuable for educators who are seeking to incorporate innovative teaching methods to enhance

student learning outcomes. Secondly, the study highlights the importance of effective communication and interaction during the project-based learning process for developing leadership skills. This finding has important implications for educators who may need to consider how they can facilitate communication and collaboration among students during project-based learning activities. Thirdly, the study highlights the need for ongoing professional development for teachers to effectively facilitate leadership skill development. This finding suggests that educators need to continuously improve their teaching practices and pedagogical approaches to provide students with the best possible learning experiences. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for integrating leadership development into educational curricula. This finding suggests that schools and educational institutions should consider incorporating leadership development activities and opportunities for students as a part of their educational programs.

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**Acknowledgements:** Thank you to LPPM UAD for providing internal research funds for 2022 with the number PD-071/SP3/LPPM-UAD/VII/2022

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# MS #5848 - The Qualitative Report

1 pesan

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Cc: The Authors <authors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com>

Dear Enung Hasanah, M Ikhsan Al Ghazi, M. Ikhwan Al Badar, and Fauzia Fauzia M.A.,

Congratulations! After careful review, your article "Enhancing Student Leadership Skills through Project-Based Learning in the Postgraduate Research Experience." has been accepted into The Qualitative Report with minor changes. We look forward to publishing your article as soon as possible.

We have determined that minor revision of your article is necessary in order for your manuscript to be ready for publication. Please see the attached Word file for our review and article mark up. Make sure you turn on the “All Markup” option in the Tracking Changes Options so you can see all our comments in your paper. The link to the page where the file is located can also be found at the end of the email. When you navigate from the email link to the page on the TQR website, please scroll down the page to find the hyperlink to the Word file with our comments and edits. Please do not use the “Native” or PDF versions to make your revisions.

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Finally, we thank you again for submitting your paper to The Qualitative Report. Please let us know if you have any questions and once again, congratulations!

Thank you,

Ronald Chenail
Co-Editor-in-Chief
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**Ronald Chenail** <editor-tqr-5848-1962308@dcnsu.bepress.com> 16 April 2023 pukul 05.34
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Dear Enung Hasanah, M Ikhsan Al Ghazi, M. Ikhwan Al Badar, and Fauzia Fauzia M.A.,

On behalf of The Editorial Board for The Qualitative Report (TQR) I would like to congratulate you on the acceptance of your article, "Enhancing Student Leadership Skills through Project-Based Learning in the Postgraduate Research Experience." We think the paper is much improved and do not see the need for any further revisions. We also appreciate all your hard work!

In order for your paper to be published, we have an Article Processing Charge (APC) of $500 (US). We use this one-time per paper submission fee to pay for copyediting, formatting, publishing, and promoting your paper.

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Again, thank you for submitting such a great paper to The Qualitative Report!

We look forward to seeing it online in the journal! Please let me know if you have any questions and once again, congratulations!

Please stay safe and well,

Ron

Ronald J. Chenail, Ph.D.
Co-Editor-in-Chief
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**Enung Hasanah** <enung.hasanah@mp.uad.ac.id> 18 April 2023 pukul 12.37
Kepada: Ronald Chenail <editor-tqr-5848-1962308@dcnsu.bepress.com>

Dear Ron,

Thank you for your email. I am always grateful to have such an opportunity to publish with TQR.
We have made the payment for the APC. Herewith, I have attached the proof of payment.

We are excited about the publication.
Thank you very much.

Best regards,

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# Unleashing Student Leadership: A Postgraduated Perspektive on Project-Based Learning Approaches

**Enung Hasanah, M Ikhsan Al Ghazy, M. Ikhwan Al Badar, Fauzia Fauzia**

## Abstract

Project-Based Learning (PjBL) is one of the learning models recognized by education experts as an effective method of achieving learning objectives in developing process skills. While project-based learning is recognized as an effective approach to developing process skills, few studies have examined its potential for fostering leadership skills. This study aims to investigate postgraduate teacher students' experiences with project-based learning as a means of developing students leadership skills. The research involved 24 postgraduate students and utilized a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis. The findings reveal that while some aspects of project-based learning were perceived as straightforward, other steps were deemed challenging, particularly those that involved higher order thinking skill and emotional consideration. However, the process of interaction and communication during the learning process appears to be a critical factor in the development of leadership skills. These results suggest that further research is needed to explore the potential of project-based learning for developing postgraduate student leadership and to identify effective strategies for implementing this approach. Overall, this study highlights the importance of integrating leadership development into educational curricula and the need for ongoing professional development for teachers to effectively facilitate leadership skill development.

Keywords: communication; high-level thinking skill; student leadership; project-based learning; qualitative method.

## Introduction

Leadership in educational institutions (Indriani & Hasanah, 2021) received a lot of attention because the leadership of teachers and principals directly or indirectly influences the quality of the education produced (Elsan Mansaray, 2019). Leadership significantly impacts the strategic management process, considerably helping define the vision and mission of the organization (Jabbar & Hussein, 2017; Priyambodo & Hasanah, 2021), as well as in the implementation process. Therefore, leadership courses must be developed in the teacher education curriculum (Egne, 2014).

Leadership education (Mazurkiewicz, 2021) is an educational process to build a scaffolding of attitudes, feelings, knowledge, and skills on moving others to want to work according to organizational goals voluntarily. Thus, lecturers need to develop learning strategies that are holistic, creative, and contextual so that lecturers can help develop student-teacher leadership skills (Osnovna & Gortan, 2016). To develop teacher-student leadership skills (Tatto, 2021), lecturers must be able to design instructions that can touch and move all components of students' self from cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects (Guthrie et al., 2021; Page et al., 2021).

The Universitas Ahmad Dahlan (UAD) is an Indonesian university that places great emphasis on nurturing the leadership abilities of its students. Within the UAD's education management program, there is a specific course dedicated to honing leadership skills, known as the School Leadership Best Practice course. This course delves into the most effective practices for school leadership that can contribute to the sustainable development of educational institutions in various aspects.

Various experiences of successful schools/madrasahs in terms of leadership have been restructured so that they can be adapted and re-implemented by other work units to realize the quality of graduates, quality of teachers, quality of the learning process, and quality of school management that are following the real needs of the world of education in Indonesia contextually and actualy (Heyward et al., 2011; Suryadarma & Jones, 2013). Following the characteristics of this course, lectures are carried out on a practice-based basis, following the principles of outcome-based education (Katawazai, 2021; Rao, 2020).

One of the learning models identified by the learning principles of outcome-based education is project-based learning (Maryani et al., 2020). The project-based learning model (PjBL) is proven effective in developing critical thinking skills, student activity, and student

creativity (Guo et al., 2020; Susanti et al., 2020; Winangun, 2021). Therefore, learning in leadership best practice courses is carried out through group project learning strategies. The learning approach used in this school leadership best practice course includes several characteristics of PjBL. Research projects require successful group dynamics and long-term goal-oriented work, so research is needed on what students feel and experience during the student leadership development process. However, there is no adequate data regarding the real benefits felt by students in developing leadership skills through the project learning process.

In this study, we focus on implementing PjBL from a student perspective to explore student experiences of implementing project-based learning in developing leadership. This research is essential to produce a conceptual model as a result of constructing knowledge from project-based learning practices that have been carried out by postgraduate students in the faculty of teacher training and education.

This research question refers to the qualitative research process on project-based learning experiences conducted by Matilaenin et al. (2021). This research was conducted by guiding the research questions as follows:

1. Which phase is the easiest to implement during the research project learning process?
2. Which phase was the most challenging to implement during the research project learning process?
3. What leadership skills can develop in students as a result of their participation in the learning of this project?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Project Based Learning

Project Based Learning (PjBL) is a student-centered teaching method based on the theory of constructivism , which was developed by John Dewey (Larmer & Mergendoller, 2015). The main objective behind developing this method is to create effective learning opportunities where learners can work collaboratively in groups to answer encouraging questions, solve problems, or overcome challenges with the aim of creating an end product. PjBL is not limited to equipping students with content knowledge, but rather developing their psychomotor and social skills, such as seeking information from various sources, critical thinking, problem solving, self-evaluation,

summarizing and giving presentations which are highly recommended for lifelong learning (Aldabbus, 2018). In other words, PjBL educates all children rather than focusing on one aspect of learning.

Project-based learning (PjBL) has gained popularity and has been explored in various contexts and in different phases of schooling, from primary education to higher education. The idea of PjBL is to engage students in authentic problem investigations where solutions have the potential to be implemented and used in real life. Several benefits are associated with PjBL. The following three unique experiences for students include: (1) a sense of freedom to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss with colleagues; (2) the feeling of being able to influence the course of the learning process; and (3) the feeling of doing something that can be applied in practice (as well as contributing to teamwork). Other reported benefits of PjBL include developing metacognitive skills, such as self-regulation, co-regulation, and monitoring, as well as supporting independent learning (Hussein, 2021). To be able to realize project-based learning, it is necessary to pay attention to various challenges that come from the conditions of teachers and students, culture, and organization (Creely, 2018).

**Setting of research project learning in school leadership best practice courses**

Leadership skill (Miasih & Hasanah, 2021), is a very important soft skill to be developed in learners, especially in education management masters education, where some of the students are teachers and principals. An educational process that can develop authentic student leadership, strengthen students' characteristics to serve and support the people around them, is not only beneficial for the students and their educational institutions but also for prospective organizations where graduates work, and even for their future in society. (Kiersch & Peters, 2017). Therefore, in universities, it is necessary to add more attention to the development of student leadership, both through the implementation of various student-centered learning strategies (Acton, 2018), as well as through mentoring (Levy-Feldman, 2018). Students need to develop various leadership skills as important soft skills, including communication and organizational skills, public speaking skills, emotional intelligence (Hine, 2014; Mokshagundam et al., 2019), and student collaboration skills (Leskinen et al., 2021). All of these leadership skills become provisions for students when they graduate and return to the institution where they work.

There is a need to explore the impact of project-based learning on the development of leadership skills among post-graduate students. This research could focus on the ways in which project-based learning promotes the development of leadership skills, as well as the long-term impact of these skills on post-graduate students' careers. There is a lack of understanding of how graduate student leadership develops; At the same time, it is clear that the project-learning process in postgraduate education is an essential factor in leadership development; there is a need to explore how the project-based learning process contributes to the development of leadership skills among graduate students. This research could focus on the role of personality traits, prior experiences, and other environmental factors in shaping the leadership development of graduate students. Overall, these are just a few potential areas of focus for research on the gap in our knowledge in terms of project-based learning and the need to develop post-graduate student leadership. By addressing these gaps, we can better understand how to support post-graduate students in developing the skills they need to become effective leaders in their fields.

In general, the project learning process carried out in the "school leadership best practice" course at the Universitas Ahmad Dahlan Master of Education Management during the odd semester of the 2021/2022 academic year is as follows:

Table 1. Learning Activities in the best practice of school leadership course.

| Week | Activity | Learning Objectives |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | • The lecturer elucidates the course's distinctive features and learning objectives alongside the project-based learning approach as a pedagogical strategy to be employed by the students.<br>• The students engage in group discussions to explore the concept of instructional leadership best practice and its relationship to the development of education policy in Indonesia, specifically regarding the profile of Pancasila students.<br>• The students are reflecting on the learning process | • The students have a comprehensive understanding of the best practices in school leadership learning as an effort to improve the instructional leadership skills of the students<br>• The students have a broad understanding of the importance of instructional leadership skills in realizing the Pancasila student profile in schools in Indonesia |
| 2 | • The students undertake an exploration of the role and function of leadership within schools, with the objective of realizing the student profile of Pancasila.<br>• The lecturer delivers a lecture on the design of project-based learning activities and the themes of research projects that each group is required to select in order to address the main research question: "How effective is the instructional leadership model in realizing the Pancasila student profile?"<br>• The students are reflecting on the learning process | Sstudents fully understand the project learning process plan and the expected final goals of the lecture. |
| 3 | • The formation of groups, the selection of research themes for each group, as well as the selection of research locations in accordance with the criteria set by the lecturer.<br>• Criteria for the school where the research is located: Driving school that has implemented the Pancasila student development project learning<br>• reflection | • Students are able to collaborate in groups and are able to make decisions.<br>• Students are able to identify leadership problems that occur in schools and the best solutions to overcome these problems. |
| 4 | • Students design projects, formulate research questions, and arrange time schedules, and determine the output targets that will be produced by each group as lecture products. | Students are able to plan effective programs.<br>Students are able to produce a systematic work program design<br>Students are able to collaborate and communication in groups. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 5 | • Students conduct initial coordination with research partners and arrange research permits to schools. Noted: in Indonesia for research students to school enough research permission from the campus. | Students are able to collaborate and communication with parties outside the group. |
| 6-7 | • Students collect field data, and conduct online consultations with lecturers | Students are able to identify things that are important in the process of developing a school. |
| Midterm exam | • Summative test [a test of knowledge of instructional leadership and student profiles of Pancasila], and each student reports the role of each individual in his work group. | Students have an understanding of the concept of instructional leadership and have individual and group responsibilities. |
| 8 | Students carry out progress reports on all activities that have been carried out in the form of seminars in class. | Students have responsibility and are able to do self-evaluation. |
| 9-10 | Students perform data analysis in groups. | Students are able to communicate effectively orally and in writing. |
| 11-12 | Students make a research project report using a template that has been set by the lecturer. | Students are able to think at higher levels and doing collaboration. |
| 13 | Lectures are carried out by presenting the principal to convey the experience of leading a school in order to realize the Pancasila student profile program, as a practical lecture. | Students are able to think at higher levels. |
| 14 | Students submit reports on group work orally in online meetings via zoom, followed by discussions and lecture reflections. | Students are able to think at higher levels. |
| Final exams | Collection of group work reports<br>Individual reflection collection. | Students are able to think at higher levels. |

**Researcher Role**

As researchers in the fields of education, social humanities, and cultural studies, our role in this research is to utilize our expertise and academic background to investigate the most effective learning strategies for developing student leadership in tertiary institutions. With our direct involvement in the learning process at Indonesian universities, we are particularly interested in producing graduates who possess strong leadership skills and can serve as valuable human resources in their respective fields.

## Research Methods

In our research, we adopted a constructivist approach, which acknowledges that a researcher cannot attain a definitive, singular reality, hence, comprehending a subject is subject to subjective interpretations that are built on individuals' experiences within cultural and historical boundaries (J. W. Creswell, 2013). By utilizing this methodology, we have obtained research findings that are more comprehensive compared to those gained using solely phenomenological methods with their particular outcomes. Thus, our research processes as a whole fall under the umbrella of qualitative research procedures (John W. Creswell, 2014).

We chose a place and research participants using purposive sampling (Jupp, 2015), namely the characteristics of the participants were students who directly experienced the process and learning outcomes through project-based learning in developing their leadership skills. The number of students in this study were 24 students. The data collection method is through in-depth individual interviews (Papke-Shields & Malhotra, 2001) with the participants.

Upon completion of the school leadership best practice learning process in the Master of Education Management study program at Universitas Ahmad Dahlan, a period of reflection is always undertaken to evaluate the process and learning outcomes. In light of our forthcoming research on the topic of student leadership, we have submitted a written request to examine the experiences of students within the Education Management study program as they develop their school leadership skills. As an educational research project involving human subjects, it is noteworthy that in our local context of Indonesia, third-party approval is not required to ensure the ethics, security, privacy, and confidentiality of participants. Nevertheless, we, as researchers, have obtained the necessary research permits from the universities where these students are enrolled. To guarantee ethical practices, security, privacy, and confidentiality for all participants, we have incorporated informed consent procedures detailing the research's execution and participants' rights during their involvement in the research (Simpson & Innes, 2020).

The data analysis process was carried out using the thematic analysis method of analysis, with the assistance of the atlas.ti 9 application (Meier et al., 2008).. After completing the data analysis, the next step is to proceed to the data interpretation stage and match it with the applicable theory. The matching results show new findings regarding implementing effective project-based

learning in developing student leadership. In general, the steps of the data analysis process can be seen in figure 1 as follows:

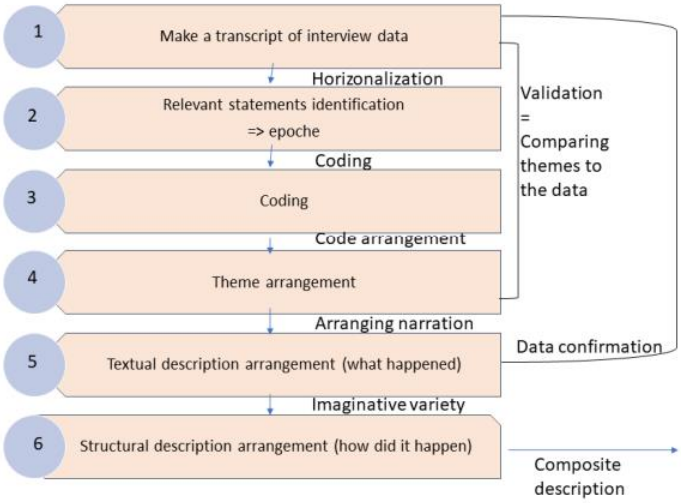


Figure 1. The steps of data analysis (Hasanah & Supardi, 2020)

According to the information presented in Figure 1, the process of analyzing the data can be described in the following manner:

1. Initially, we transcribed the data by utilizing the recordings of the in-depth interviews, and subsequently, we thoroughly reviewed the journal and field notes to obtain a more accurate understanding of the research context. Our use of journal and field notes was essential in ensuring the precision and reliability of the data.
2. Subsequently, a comprehensive investigation was carried out to isolate statements related to our research topic. Throughout this phase, we carefully examined the accounts of the participants, who effectively conveyed the fundamental essence of their experiences concerning the best practice leadership lecture process, and the leadership skills they perceived to have developed while following the various learning steps. The meticulous execution of the coding procedure involved a comprehensive analysis of each word in the transcript to apprehend its significance and identifying appropriate terms that represent the essence of the statement, in relation to the research context.

Coding entails the discernment of pertinent meanings within each participant's statements, with reference to the research objectives and background. In essence, coding is a decision-making process, where the researcher utilizes the research methodology and background to make crucial decisions regarding coding elements such as conceptual similarity, statement meaning, and data size. It is essential to maintain an unbiased approach during coding by assuming that every participant's statement is of equal value, thereby assigning impartial meaning to all relevant data. The procedure for conducting coding is illustrated as follows:

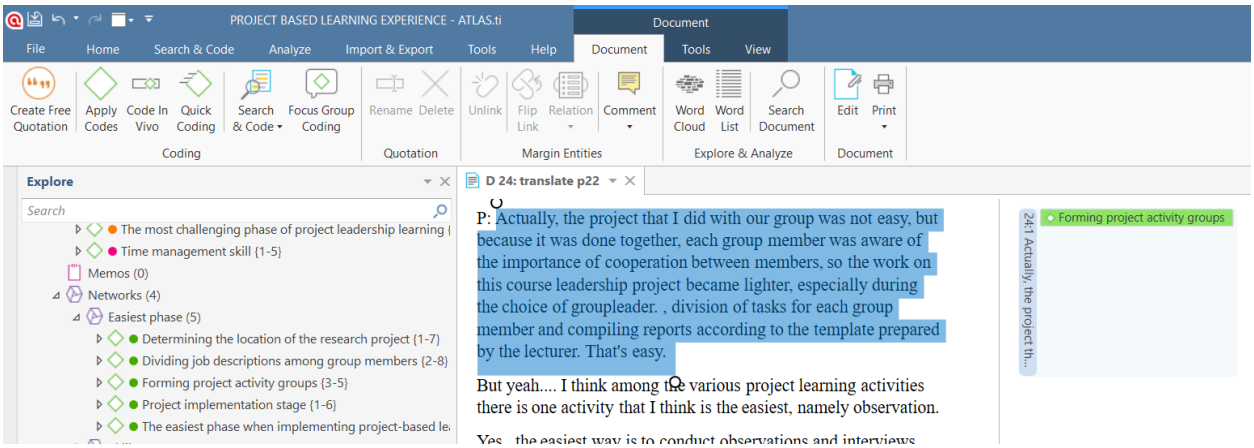


Figure 2. Coding process

3. Once all the transcripts had been encoded, a total of 23 codes were discovered, indicating the students' acquisition of leadership skills while engaging in project-based learning activities. Our subsequent task involves categorizing these codes into three distinct thematic groups: The easiest phase, the most challenging phase, and developing leadership skills.

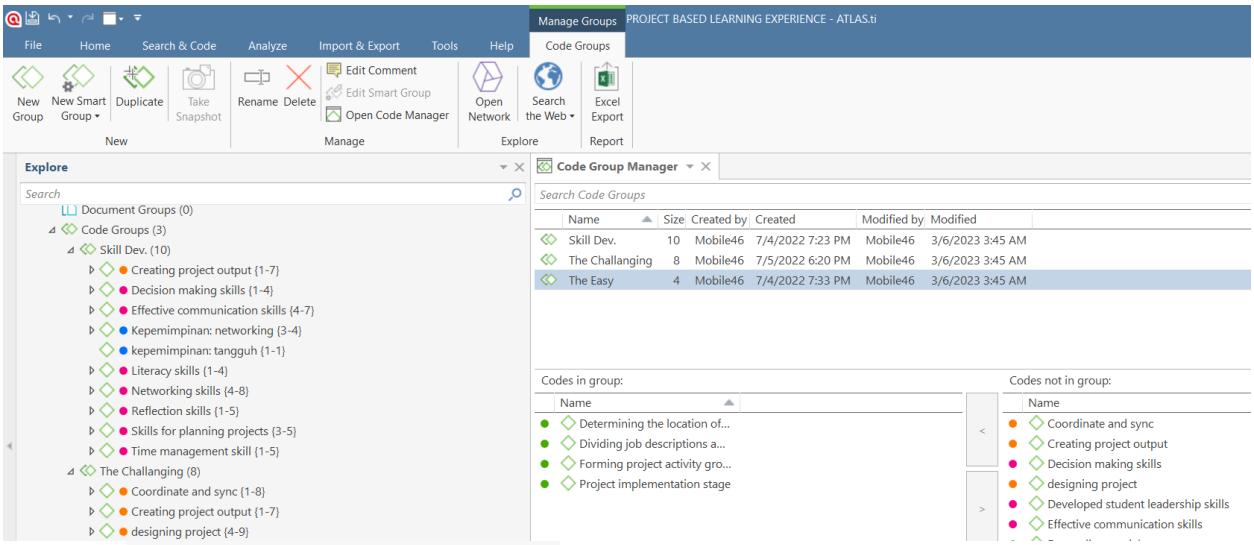

Figure 3. The process of forming the theme

4. The subsequent step entailed organizing the Individual Textural Description (ITD) whereby we utilized data obtained from the coded and themed transcribed in-depth interview recordings. To create the ITD, we commenced by interpreting the significance of each participant's encounters, a process that adhered to Moustakas' (1994) recommendation that researchers should meticulously examine every participant's words or statements to unveil distinctive perspectives regarding the subject of study.
5. Following the successful construction of ITD for each participant, we proceeded to develop a Composite Textural Description (CTD) based on all the themes identified. Once the CTD was in place, we crafted a Structural Description (SD) that captured the "hidden" experiences perceived by the researchers, illustrating the "how" of the phenomenon to clarify the "what" of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).
6. In order to construct a comprehensive understanding of participant experiences, we merged CTD and CSD to form a Composite Textural-Structural Description (CTSD), which was analyzed repeatedly to extract the essence of the experience. During this process, we reviewed and re-identified all the themes and transcripts, and took into account the Javanese cultural context that serves as the backdrop for participants' lives. To obtain a complete understanding of the group, cultural context is essential. The results of our combined analysis are presented in the discussion section, demonstrating how project-based learning can enhance postgraduate students' leadership skills.

Specifically, we found that effective communication and interaction between all parties is crucial for successful project learning, and that project learning can facilitate the development of leadership skills through the cultivation of emotional management and higher-order thinking abilities.

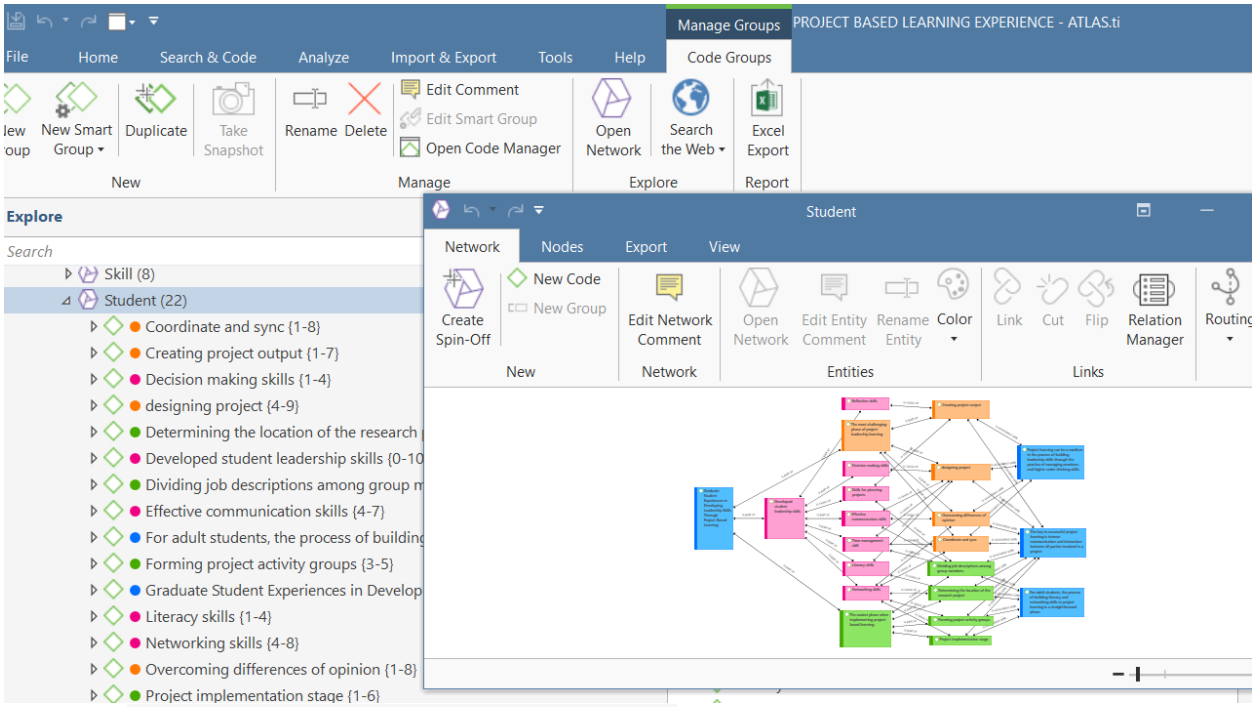

Figure 4. Composite Textural-Structural Description

## Findings

The research results are described as follows:

### Theme 1. The easiest step According to the students' activities

In the school leadership best practice course, there are four key activities that students can easily engage in during the project-based learning process. These activities are illustrated in Figure 5 below:

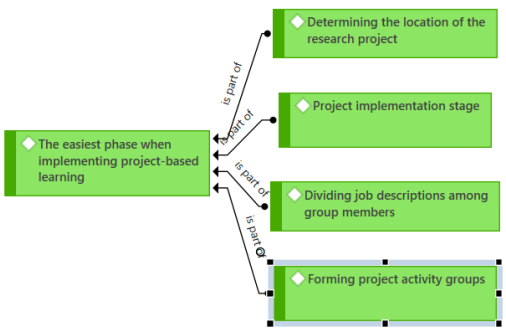

Figure 5. The easiest phase in project-based learning process

Figure 5 shows that the easiest phase during the project leadership learning process is in the activities of forming project activity groups: deternining the location of the research project, project implementation stage, dividing job description among group members, forming project activity goups. The explanation of these four activities is as follows:

The process of forming a work group.

In the project-based learning process, forming a work group is the first step that students must take. In this step, each student must find a partner to work on their project. For graduate students, this step is considered the easiest. The following statement from one of the participants illustrates this sentiment:

> The easiest thing in the initial process of project learning is the step of forming a working group. We only need a moment to find friends who want to join the work group because all of us already know each other (P3, lines 6-9).

The participants feel that forming a working group is one of the easiest learning activities because it does not require much thinking. Having good socialization skills is enough to easily find groupmates to work with.

**Choosing a research location**

One of the jobs that must be done by students in conducting research-based project learning is choosing a research location. According to postgraduate students, this is an easy thing because they already have good relationships and communication skills. The following is P13's explanation of this:

> The easiest thing in my opinion is to find/determine the object of the project, where educational institutions in Indonesia are very diverse, so choosing a place to be used as a project (in this case a school leadership best practice project) is quite easy, just how to communicate with related parties (P13, lines 7-9).

**Division of job descriptions among members**

The easy phase according to some participants was the job description division phase because all group members were adults and had an awareness of their respective tasks in the study group. The statement regarding this matter is as follows:

> We are postgraduate students who tend to have mature thoughts, each individual's work awareness is also high, so in our group, the most accessible phase is when we divide work tasks. Each member gets a task to support our research project's success, and all of them can commit to working together as a group. That is the most accessible phase in my experience (P21, rows 5-10).

**Project Implementation**

The project implementation session was perceived by the students as an easy part of the activity. The reason for the participants who said that project implementation was easy was because all they had to do was implement it, the preparations had been done thoroughly. Relevant statements regarding this matter were stated by P'17 as follows:

> The easiest phase of project assignment in my opinion is during project implementation with the children. Project implementation in our group is part of the data collection process. In that phase, all preparations have been done carefully the day before, so that implementation becomes easier (P17, lines 8-10).

P20 also states the same thing as what has been stated by P17 as follows:

> For me, the easiest phase is the project implementation phase, starting from the preparation of materials, division of tasks, documentation, and also data collection for the preparation of project activity reports. All of these activities are easy because all you have to do is carry out according to the plan and time schedule that has been mutually agreed upon between all group members, as well as an agreement between our group and the principal of the school where you are doing the research (P20, lines 6-10)

**Theme 2. The most challenging phase**

Based on the experiences of students during the project learning process in this school leadership course, there are eight main activities as shown in Figure 3 below:

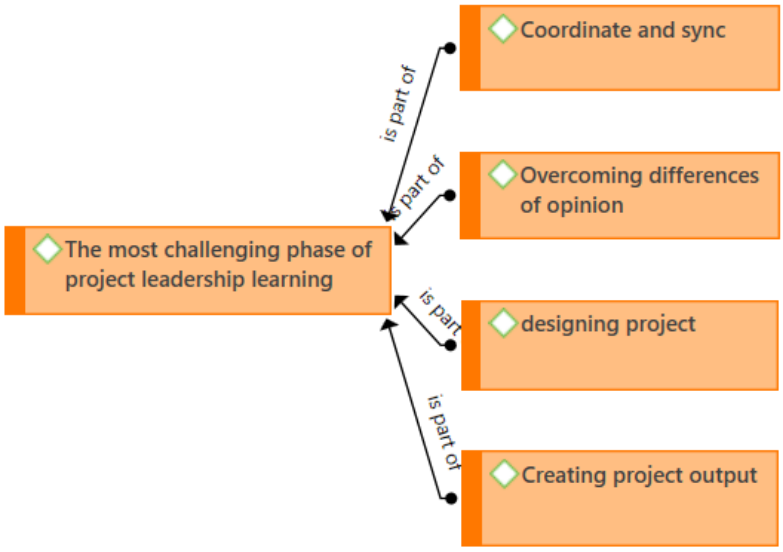


Figure 3. The most challenging phase of project learning

Designing project

Based on the narratives of the participants, the activity of designing project designs is the most challenging phase for students. The process of designing a design requires high-level thinking skills and also requires deep thinking. Below is the relevant statement regarding this matter:

> Among all the phases in the learning of this project I feel that the process of designing a project is the most challenging and difficult because all members of our group are officials in their respective schools so that our group must coordinate with personal time synchronization. Designing a design is not an easy thing, it requires a lot of knowledge and consideration so that it can be exactly according to the expected goals (P1, lines 56-68).

**Overcoming differences of opinion**

The participants stated that one part of challenging project-based learning activities is when there is a difference of opinion it is still difficult to find a solution. Below are some quotes from relevant participants about the difficulties of overcoming these differences of opinion.

> The part that has not been mastered while running this project is accepting different opinions, because my dominant character always wants to influence not be influenced, so it is quite difficult to find agreement (P3, lines 71-73).

P14 Also states the same thing regarding the difficulty of overcoming differences of opinion between members as follows:

> When we move from one schedule to the next, sometimes we disagree with each other. Usually each member has their own views and both do not want to give in, so sometimes there is a tough debate in the group. Although in the end there is a solution, but I feel it is something difficult (P14, lines 69-73).

**Coordinating and synchronizing schedules**

In the condition of the COVID-19 pandemic, all human movement is limited, making the coordination process with teammates and resource persons something that requires great effort. Here are some relevant statements from participants:

> After I followed and we went through in making this project, I personally had difficulties in terms of coordination and synchronization, considering that each individual has various activities and activities, plus the distance is quite far, so meeting and completing this project is a bit of a challenge. , although it can still be solved with tremendous effort in our opinion (P12, lines 69-74).

**Compile project output**

According to the participants, one of the challenges in the project learning process was preparing the output because this process required foresight and the ability to interpret data, skills to create a product, and the ability to write reports. Below are some relevant statements made by the participants

> The most challenging phase in this project flow is the agreed product (output) manufacturing phase, namely video. I find this phase difficult because my competence related to making videos is still very limited. My video-making competence is still limited to the kinemaster application (P7, lines 23-26).

P11 also said that the process of preparing project outputs was very challenging because it required accuracy and synthesis skills. The following is P11's statement:

> In my opinion, the most difficult challenge in the learning process of this project is re-exploring the data obtained and then synthesizing the data into a new science which is then poured into a report (P111, lines 25-27).

**Theme 3. Developing student leadership skills**

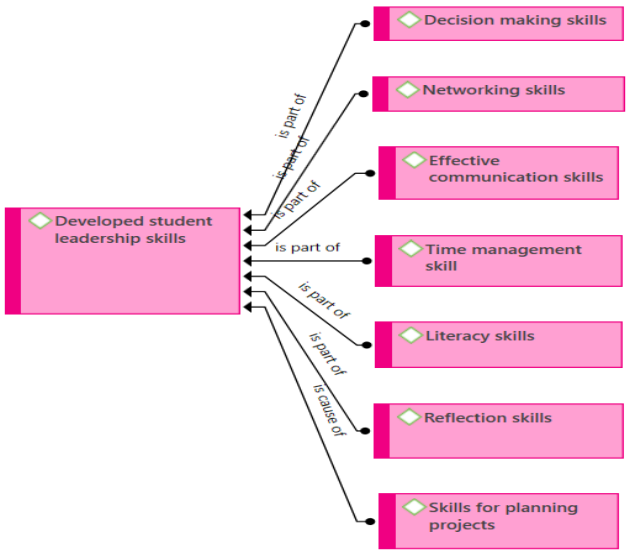


Figure 4. Theme 3. Developing student leadership skills

Figure 4 shows that the results of research project-based learning have succeeded in developing various leadership skills in students as follows:

**Skills to plan a program**

One of the leadership skills mastered by the participants after participating in project learning is the skill to plan a program more professionally. The participants admitted that through exploration, discussion, and discussion with all group members, the students became aware of the procedures for preparing a thorough plan. Below is P1's statement regarding this matter:

> The initial process of project learning is to develop a design. In this process we conducted various information explorations related to matters related to the project topic that our group had chosen. With that process we have the skills to design a project carefully because it is accompanied by reading and working skills (P1, lines 91-94).

**Effective communication skills**

In research project learning, each process requires communication between groups so that participants feel the practice of interacting and communicating directly with group members and partners where the project is implemented. The participants felt that learning

this project could improve their practical communication skills from this activity. Below is Statement P13 as follows:

> The skills that I have understood and can put into practice as one of the leadership skills that have developed for me are the ability to communicate and coordinate, collaborate among friends, relate to other schools, learn about new government policies. This is a valuable experience for me (P 13, lines 86-89).

**Time management skills**

Time management became a skill that was successfully developed as a self-skill of the participants through the learning of this project. The following are relevant statements regarding this matter:

> In the early days of college, sometimes I felt pressured to attend this leadership best practice course because I was very disciplined in terms of the use of time. Everything must be in accordance with the time schedule that has been designed, both online and offline, it's the same, it must be on time. Over time and thanks to real examples from lecturers, I finally felt accustomed to time discipline, I even practiced the discipline at the school where I worked (P15, lines 89-93).

**Literacy skills**

According to the participants, project learning has forced students to read and improve their reading skills because the whole process was checked and reviewed by the lecturer, given input and suggested to add materials. The following is P7's statement as follows:

> When I took this course in the form of riset project-based learning, I felt that my literacy about leadership had improved. This I got apart from the lecturer's explanation, I was also actively looking for information on effective leadership behavior as material for the group to design projects and also at the stage of analyzing and interpreting data on leadership (P7, lines 91-94).

**Networking skills**

Riset project work in groups and the obligation to have partners for project implementation has made participants have better networking skills. Below is the relevant statement from P8:

> Making projects in groups in this course has taught me many things, especially about the ability to collaborate with others and build networks to complete our

> projects. On the one hand, I also feel that my disciplinary abilities are developing because the lecturers always ask for troublesome progress about my role in the group, so I also have to take part in our group work seriously and actively. This pattern has succeeded in forcing me to be really active and disciplined in doing group assignments (P8, lines 95-101)

Another statement that corroborates the previous opinion, quoted from P10 as follows:

> Actually, I feel that many leadership skills have developed as a result of project learning in this leadership best practice course, such as the ability to plan, communicate, make decisions, collaborate and reflect on activities. Among the skills that most dominantly developed was my ability to build networks. This form of learning project must involve external parties in this project, so everyone must have a network, and in the end I know how to build a network at work as well as I can understand the tremendous benefits of this networking ability (P10, lines 91-96)

**Decision-making skills**

P1 emphasized that in the process of preparing the project design several options must be considered so that the project prepared is on target. Therefore, P1 felt that through this experience emerged the skills to make choices and make decisions quickly and accurately.

> In preparing the project design, many considerations were conveyed by each group member and used as choices. That's when I felt there was a thought process that forced me as the group leader to make the best decisions so that the project that was compiled became a good project. In addition to the preparation of the project plan, in other project steps, I am often faced with various choices that require me to make decisions. This has succeeded in building my ability to make the right decisions because the lecturers also always give directions and clues to find solutions (P1, lines 96-104).

**Reflection skills**

According to the participants, students were always asked to reflect in each phase of the project's learning activities. This has succeeded in improving the reflection skills of the participants, as stated by P21 below.

> Every cycle in the learning activities of this project, we are always asked to reflect. The continuous practice of reflection makes me more able to do reflection to see what I've done, then I practice to find solutions to fix any shortcomings. In addition, I practice to find out the point of achievement of the program. This I feel is an extraordinary skill and I can do it (P21, lines 101-105).

## Discussion

The results of the in-depth analysis of the codes and themes in this research indicate that there are two essential aspects of the postgraduate students' experience in carrying out project-based learning and its relation to the process of developing leadership skills, namely: 1) Intense communication and interaction among all parties involved in a group project is the key to successful project-based learning; 2) Project-based learning can serve as a medium in the process of developing leadership skills through the practice of managing emotions and higher-order thinking skills. A conceptual model of the research findings can be seen in Figure 5 as follows:

Figure 5. The conceptual model for developing student leadership through project-based learning.

**The key to successful project learning is intense communication and interaction between all parties involved in a group project**

The results of this study indicate that each process in learning research projects in groups requires communication skills and interactions between all parties involved, both lecturers and students, students and students, as well as students and partners in the project being carried out. The intensity communication between groups (Kuswanti et al., 2020), allows students to have direct social interaction with other group members. This interaction in the learning process has an important function in developing students' social skills (Siddiky, 2020).

The pattern of intense communication and interaction among all project group members is the key to the group's success in achieving the learning objectives that have been set. This is in line with several research results which show that communication is very important when someone works in a group, because good communication can overcome various problems of misunderstanding, find solutions to overcome differences in views, and to overcome various dynamics that occur in groups (Fischer-Grönlund et al., 2021; Rollins et al., 2020; Tropp et al., 2021), so that it can be realized effective learning in realizing learning objectives (Visser et al., 2021). Group members can negotiate, coordinate, and collaborate smoothly through a communication pattern that both parties can accept, both the sender and the recipient of the message (Chen, 2021; Gai et al., 2021). The pattern of coordination and communication between participants represents the role that individuals play in group activities (Dowell et al., 2019), as well as being able to distinguish the learning outcomes of a learning process (Roldán-Álvarez et al., 2020).

The students highlighted the importance of feedback from lecturers during project implementation so that students better understand which targets have been achieved and which still need to be pursued and improved. Even though postgraduate students are adults, they still feel they need explanations and input from the lecturers to strengthen their understanding. This research shows that feedback from lecturers is essential in the learning process even though the learners are adult learners. The results of this study are in line with several previous research results, which state that feedback from teachers has a positive effect on the development of motivation, student activity, and student achievement (Gan et al., 2021; Han & Xu, 2020; Le, 2016; Panigrahi et al., 2018).

**Project-based learning can be a medium in the process of building leadership skills through the practice of managing emot**ions and higher-order thinking skills.

Leadership skills (Akhwaba et al., 2020), are one of the most important soft skills in the world of education. The results of this study indicate that the pedagogical method in the form of Project-Based Learning (PjBL), has the ability to develop student teacher leadership skills (Nacak et al., 2020), seperti planning projects skill (Hero & Lindfors, 2019), decision making skills (Valente et al., 2020), communication skills (Gratton & Erickson, 2007), Literacy skills (Kaeophanuek et al., 2019), Networking skills (Bruthers et al., 2021), and reflection skills (Guo et al., 2020).

The results of this study indicate that the process of developing leadership skills occurs in students when students interact and communicate directly with others, practice each step of learning in groups, and share responsibilities during the process of completing group assignments. In the process of implementing projects in groups, each member and group leader is required to be able to manage emotions and use high-level thinking skills. Thus, this study supports the findings of previous research which states that project-based learning has the ability to utilize students' potential in soft skills. PjBL preparation (planning), implementation, commitment, and assessment techniques each have a significant positive impact on improving soft skills among students (Dogara et al., 2019, 2020). It is proven that project-based learning facilitates the growth of learners in acquiring these skills (Khamdun et al., 2021; Musa et al., 2012).

Theoretical implications from this research suggest that project-based learning is an effective method for developing process skills and has potential for fostering leadership skills in postgraduate teacher students. However, the study also reveals that the process of interaction and communication during the learning process is critical in developing leadership skills, and that effective strategies for implementing project-based learning for leadership skill development need to be identified. These findings underscore the importance of integrating leadership development into educational curricula and providing ongoing professional development for teachers to facilitate leadership skill development. Future research could explore the potential of project-based learning for developing leadership skills in different contexts and populations and investigate effective approaches for integrating leadership development into educational programs.

The practical implications of this research result are significant for both postgraduate teacher students and educators. Firstly, the study provides evidence that project-based learning is a potentially effective approach for developing leadership skills in students. This information is valuable for educators who are seeking to incorporate innovative teaching methods to enhance

student learning outcomes. Secondly, the study highlights the importance of effective communication and interaction during the project-based learning process for developing leadership skills. This finding has important implications for educators who may need to consider how they can facilitate communication and collaboration among students during project-based learning activities. Thirdly, the study highlights the need for ongoing professional development for teachers to effectively facilitate leadership skill development. This finding suggests that educators need to continuously improve their teaching practices and pedagogical approaches to provide students with the best possible learning experiences. Finally, the study emphasizes the need for integrating leadership development into educational curricula. This finding suggests that schools and educational institutions should consider incorporating leadership development activities and opportunities for students as a part of their educational programs.

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# MS #5848: New submission published to The Qualitative Report

1 pesan

**Editors of The Qualitative Report** <editors-tqr-5848@dcnsu.bepress.com> 14 Mei 2023 pukul 02.29
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Hi!

Dear Enung Hasanah, M Ikhsan Al Ghazi, M. Ikhwan Al Badar, and Fauzia Fauzia M.A.,

Congratulations, your submission "Enhancing Student Leadership Skills through Project-Based Learning in the Postgraduate Research Experience" (MS #5848) has been published to The Qualitative Report.

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We appreciate you sending us your paper and for working with us through the manuscript development process!

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Thank you so much!

Thank you,

The Editors

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