

# Children's Self-Regulated Learning Based- Experience through Environment and Culture Rural Community Sarawak

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## Abstract

The environment and culture of the rural community in Sarawak has a profound impact on the experiences, values, effectiveness and affective realities of children in the area. The rural communities living in Sarawak are still practicing and maintaining their unique culture and lifestyle. For instance the “*nakap kikir*” culture which mean the activity of searching or hunting the forest produce as their main sources of daily family food, wedding culture that called “*adat aweh*” and “*petated*”, and also the usage of folded leaf as a rice container or “*nanga luba tinga*” are still commonly practiced. This local living culture has become a meaningful experience in these children's lives and even builds their potential into a great extent. This paper work discusses the self-learning through these experiences can also shape children's identity and personality through the implementation of informal knowledge and skills. Self-regulated learning among children living in the rural is made by the interaction between the experiences that comes from the unique environment and culture within the area. Past literature reviews and studies focused merely on cognitive aspect as benchmark for children potential, which has become a barrier for the rural children. Children living in rural area have different sets of potential and development, as the potential seen through the children living in rural area which involve learning based on experiences is impossible to be thought in a formal learning.

Keywords: Self-Regulation, Experiential Learning, Community Culture

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## 1. Introduction

Transformation in relation to the positive educational development in Malaysia has a great impact and influence on child development these days. Transformational education enshrined in the Malaysian Education Development Plan

(2013-2025) sets a benchmarking for outcomes and particular changes in the national human capital development. Cross curricular education development is regarded as a priority which does not merely emphasize student academic achievement, but also incorporates affective learning and self-experience. A type of learning which includes overt and holistic learning in particular does

not only confine to the stipulation of curriculum serving as the standard of an individual's cognitive level (Marzuki Mohd Yassim, 2013). For example, children rely on environment and culture which are the dominant factors, besides the experiences that they have in shaping their own character.

Environment and culture have a huge impact on social behavior. This can be clearly seen in the culture and lifestyle of the rural community in which children are more highly immersed compared to that of the school environment. The environment, in which the rural community is surrounded by along with its customs, culture, and self-philosophy, has a comprehensive effect on children's experiential behavior and minds. The rural communities in Sarawak are known for their diverse beliefs and customs which become the cores of each generation and social trends. The philosophical culture of this group mainly possesses certain symbolic interactions, which become peculiarity as a determining factor and the essence of success of someone's life. Children's lives in rural areas are meaningful which deserve attention in this decade. In contrary to culture and environment which are dominant in the formation of local children's characters, formal academics does not establish any significant correlation. It can be noted that culture and environment are the trend for these children. Experiences which are shaped by trials and errors, occurring within the life of this group of people are worthy of a list of disciplines, thus can be recognized as a non-formal learning outcomes.

## **2. The Concept of Self-Regulated Learning Based-Experience**

The conceptualization of self-regulated learning based experience has a broad definition. Bandura explains self-regulation is an individual's capability to control oneself in performing a learning process. Meanwhile, self-regulation, according to Franklen, refers to an individual's ability to ascertain the degree of moderation in behaviour and use of knowledge to achieve a goal which brings about the well-being of universal life. The comparison between the two scholars concludes that regulation can be defined as an ability or capability of an individual in developing one's character through the two types of control – emotional control and adaptative control of knowledge outcome (cognitive adaptation).

Bandura further explains about three stages in self-regulatory process i.e. self-observation of certain things, (ii) self-evaluation, and (iii) giving feedback to a number of evaluations aspects. According to Blair, Protzo & Urache (2011: 20-35), currently, children's capability includes all cognitive aspects as well as independent emotional control

depicts a scenario of self-regulation. This matter accounts for how a character can be developed by children with their capability to personally control and handle all cognitive elements of environments and culture in their setting. Children should overcome all complex scenarios on their own until they are able to create a significant experience in an instant through a process i.e. experiential learning.

Self-regulatory learning is pivotal in children pre-learning prior to entry into formal education. This matter can be supported by research by Fazz. Dkk (2007: 340-347) which explains that the children's level of adjustment and adaptation to early environment is high and they are able to manage and plan, aside from defending themselves and solving a problem that arises. A high level of memory retention of the early childhood stage is capable of storing any forms of experiences and information, which later can be applied when necessary (Bull & Scerif 2001:273-293). He added that a child's long term memory was formed through experiential learning and adaptation of tasks assigned to them, which require them to memorize and perform them as certain skills. This clearly shows that self-regulation of the early childhood stage is significant in developing character and affective through experiences as a result of environmental influences or even certain cultures.

Experiential learning (EL) can be observed through various concepts and predictions, for instance, Wolfe and Byrne (1975) state that the concept of experiential learning is absolutely accurate being the definition, whereas John Dewey emphasized that EL is a direct learning method through the operation of 'learning by doing'. Hoover (1974) discusses that EL is a holistic involvement of something which develops certain processes involving cognitive and affective until significant experience is formed. Considering the environmental influences and cultural impact on EL, it can be reinforced by Ford's definition (1986) who found that learning which was formed is not only the result of the 'doing' process, but also refers to the experience of observing the outcomes of field work. Field work in this context is not seen as a formal education, but rather by providing an opportunity for education through sociocultural influences.

Rural communities in Sarawak consist of diverse cultures and traditions. Societal culture develops within a rural subgroup normally becomes a generational trend which are followed by the whole inhabitants because of their ethnicity and solidarity as a result of the acceptance of holistic culture. From the perspective of this research, a basis of investigation can be made into Lun Bawang ethnic group – a rural minority community in a rural area of Sarawak which can contribute towards EL through child

regulation. A number of justifications of societal culture context which is complex in nature have been made. E.B Taylor (1974) explains culture as something complex encompassing knowledge, beliefs, usage, art and anything manifested by human conduct and behaviour in a social life.

Such definition provides a correlation between culture and knowledge which have a high interdependency level because knowledge is developed within a local environment. Lun Bawang's culture in Sarawak still maintains a set of norms passed down to their children. Culture as such, makes children gain knowledge which is difficult for other children to acquire. The adoption and practice of the culture from which an experience is derived are due to several factors such as parents and friends, financial constraint, and children's own interest. These three factors clearly develop such societal culture adopted by children to the point of which turns it into useful knowledge.

### 3. Self-regulated learning based-experience

Self-regulated learning based-experience occurs during the early childhood stage where children absorb any experience created within their milieu. Experience occurs as a result of acts performed by children themselves. Generally, theoretical learning can be referred to the Cyclical Learning Based on Experience (Kolb et. al 1999). This theoretical basis focuses on formal education where children accept learning process and makes it as experience in their lives. The complexity of EL as a method in learning includes the whole aspect of child development, cognitive aspect and emotional aspect; thus, forging children's character and behaviour. Mainly, learning theory focuses on teaching and learning. However, this paper presents a new implementation where EL is made as a basis of self-directed learning for children.

The full participation of the children in every cultural activity forms a memorable applicable EL in their lives. Based on EL model, the full participation of pupils (children) in every activity involving intensive act and experience will result in a basis of comprehensive education. Nevertheless, as discussed in this paper, education is formed in a self-regulatory way and dispensable of any assistance, except influences and experience from cultural and environmental aspects. Learning through experience can be associated with the EL cycle pioneered by David Kolb, who explains specifically on how human receives experience as a learning process. However, the model merely focuses on EL process, whereas EL theoretical basis as elaborated in this paper renders personification to the occurrence of this process among rural children who act in a self-regulatory manner towards culture and environments to the point of

which a significant experience is formed; thereby, modifying the four cyclical EL model into a self-regulation based-experience.

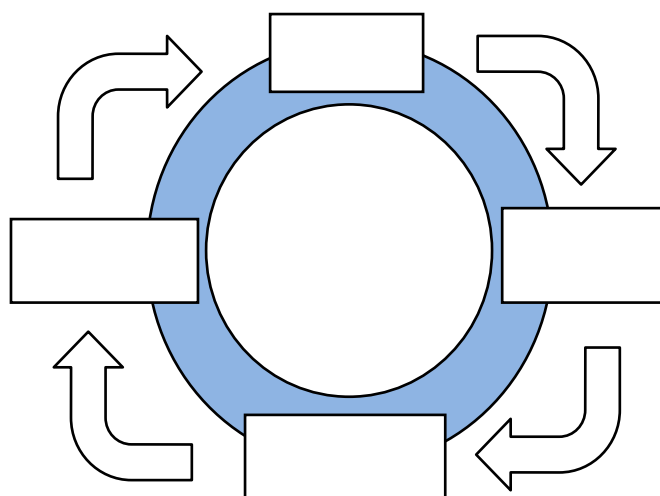


FIGURE 1: Self-regulated Learning Based-Experience Model which is modified from David Kolb's Four Cyclical Self-regulated Based-Experience Model

Essentially, Kolb's four cyclical mode of EL only outlines four processes, which takes place in learning as a method. The model provides an accurate description of how learning from experience is developed. Nevertheless, in this context, several factors are ought to be addressed as an EL process – (i) whether the process takes place in a self-regulatory manner or with an educator and (ii) factors which influence an experience. The self-regulation model explains two main things, i.e. first, contextual experience on how it occurs. For instance, when children perform an activity through the cultural influence or societal trend, it will arouse curiosity in them and they will follow the trend until an experience is formed in them. This happens during a concrete learning process where children will make a reflection of the experience.

Second, cultural and environmental influences, which affect self-regulation, create certain experiences.

Abstract matters emerging from culture and environment are adapted in children’s conduct to the point of which knowledge is created in them. For instance, as a tradition, male children go to the woods to order to look for food is practised by the Lun Bawang community of Sarawak which is known as “*nakap kikiid*”. Abstract matters can be observed through inexplicable acts of how this group of children possesses high intensity in searching for food in the jungle such as diving for fish, making nets, spears, and marble guns, and making a small huts of wood. The adaptation and influence from their fathers, brothers and friends create an impact on children’s conduct and experience.

Culture and environment have an effect on child development. This claim can be supported by Urie Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory. Based on this theory, sociocultural and environmental aspects have a direct relationship with an individual’s development from birth to adulthood (Mok Soon Sang, 2009). This relationship can be explained by putting culture and the environment as a basis of children character building. Thus, this theory explains a child or individual’s development which takes place through a direct interaction with environments and a local setting, creating a circumstance, whether or not it gives them some experience in a literal or figurative sense (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The formation of meaning will form a useful piece of knowledge for these children until they are capable to apply the experience in their daily lives.

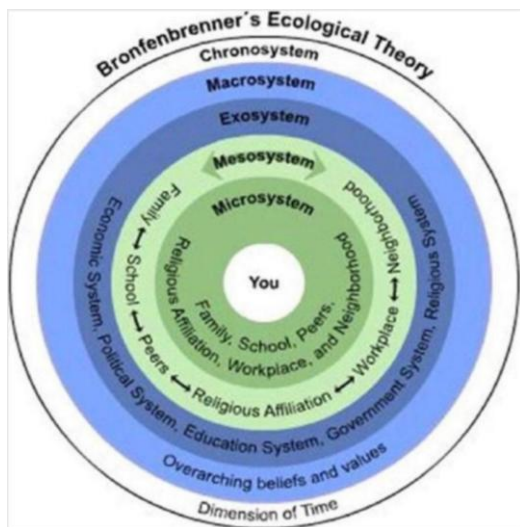


FIGURE 2 : Bronfenbrenner’s Ecology Theory

Children’s learning based-experience can clearly be seen in the layers of the microsystem of Bronfenbrenner’s ecology theory. The layers in the ecological theory conclude that the nearest environment which becomes the setting of

children’s lives has a huge impact on their knowledge. The environment refers to a system of local livelihood, i.e. the social pattern, the cultural pattern, living atmosphere and social activities. This can be depicted in the livelihood of the Lun Bawang community of Sarawak. For example, social activities such as wedding customs.

During a wedding ceremony, the children are the happiest group because they can do any kinds of activities which bring about them the well-being and happiness. A wedding starts off with children’s endeavor and direct engagement in making pack rice “*nanga luba tinga*” creating an experience in which patience and diligence are instilled in them. One of the other customary practices during a wedding that the children are assigned to is bring dowry “*petated*” during a wedding ceremony “*aweih*”, giving them an experience of work together in performing a task. Children’s direct interaction and involvement in such local setting give them more confidence, besides providing them with certain skills as well as creating a development arising from such experience which is complex since it involves cognitive, emotional and affective aspect. The experience derived from such environment is long lasting and adaptable in children’s daily lives until they feel comfortable enough to place their trust on their existing surroundings and the environment (Santrock, 2007).

**4. Challenges and Recommendations**

Not only the clash of cultures and environment of this decade scrutinizes the existing form of socialization, but also exploring the factors and influences, apart from culture and environment, which begin to permeate into the social system and its norms including the rural minorities. The information technology explosion has a considerable amount of impact on the development of a child’s experience which positive culture and traditions, instilling independence, affective and knowledge for children, has recently eroded. Despite rural children taking delight in technology seems worrying, the effect that technology brings is not extensive. This minority group, however, continues to preserve the culture that provides them with interesting experiences around their villages. Although this matter seems complex for discussion, the conclusion behind it is concrete enough to justify the reasons why the rural children of Sarawak continue to rely on the environment and the local setting as a micro influence, from which experiences and character are formed within the children.

Unhealthy environment also has a negative effect on child development. They learn and make use of anything that happens around them. A good memory system of a child is able to process any norms, be positive or negative, and filter these norms into significant experiences. A great challenge is

unhealthy family environment such as lifestyle, language, nourishment and so forth create a strong influence on children. They process the things they observe as experience and knowledge because young children have not been able to distinguish between good or bad.

The reception of self-skills, affective and experience is difficult to measure either in formality way or recognized as an academic achievement because our education system still prioritizes academic achievement through examinations and formal tests at school. Any types of learning through self-experience will not be a determinant for a child to attain a high level of education. Society's perception of these days in relation to this matter also leaves an impact on experiential system designed by children. Society perceives and creates a standard expectation that education is monumental for measuring children's achievement so much so that the formation of experience through self-regulation is not regarded as a priority.

The backbone of education, namely, the Ministry of Malaysian Education, should abide by and sensitive towards rural children's development who do not only receive formal education. Although the knowledge that they possess is not written on exam papers, knowledge appertaining to the development of self-regulated learning based experience through the influence of local socioculture. Perhaps, an association for the development of Children's Self-Regulated Learning Based-experience should be set up as a valid measurement of dominant experience such as affective, emotion and cognitive among children so that knowledge development in them is recognized as an educated social group.

Differences in a local culture have a profound effect on the development of an individual's value. According to Koentjaraningat (1990:180), culture is the whole system of ideas, action and the human's masterpiece from the facet of life of society which is made for human. Apparently, non-formal self-regulatory learning based-experience from culture influences children's character, thus leading to skill-development, knowledge, emotion and affective. The culture lover group should be well-versed in local cultures which have effects on the development of education of the new generation. A number of cultural aspects should be addressed and documented as well as made as the source of cultural knowledge which has an impact on social development.

## 5. Conclusion

Generally, child self-regulated learning based-experience is a unique learning process. This learning based experience influenced by a local culture and environment. The full

participation of children in culture and social activities in rural areas of Sarawak provide a holistic perception that skill, knowledge, emotion, and affective are formed through a significant experience. A child's character development will be more effective if environment and culture within his setting is positive. Character which has been formed through a self-regulated experience will have an impact on children's outcome as a reasonable development at the point of which it leaves an impact on their daily lives.

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