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Experience-Based Training Management: Experiential Learning for Improving Hairdressing Trainees' Skills in a Course Institution

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Abstract: This study aims to describe experience-based training management through the application of an experiential learning strategy to improve hairdressing trainees' skills at LKP Widhi Jember. Experiential learning is a learning strategy oriented toward real experience through a cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach, and the research site was purposively selected because LKP Widhi is a nonformal education institution that has implemented experiential learning in its hairdressing training. Purposive sampling selected the instructor and trainees as key informants and the institution manager as a supporting informant. Data were collected through participant observation, semi-structured interviews, and documentation, analysed using the Miles and Huberman interactive model, and validated through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and source and technique triangulation. The results show that experience-based training management was implemented systematically through the four stages of Kolb's cycle, which were repeated in every practice session. The strategy supported the development of trainees' psychomotor skills from guided response to mechanism and complex overt response in hair washing and blow-drying. The main constraints were limited instructor mentoring time and the trainees' lack of prior experience. Training institutions are recommended to design repeated practice–reflection cycles supported by structured feedback and an adequate instructor–trainee ratio.
Keywords: experiential learning, training management, psychomotor skills, hairdressing, nonformal education

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INTRODUCTION

Nonformal education is a type of education organised outside the formal education pathway in a structured, tiered manner, aimed at developing learners' potential through knowledge mastery and personal development (Syaadah et al., 2023). In this context, Course and Training Institutions (Lembaga Kursus dan Pelatihan/LKP) play an important role, particularly in facilitating applicable vocational skills training. Under Article 26 Paragraph 4 of Law Number 20 of 2003 on the National Education System (2003), LKPs are part of the nonformal education system that provides life skills training. One nonformal education institution engaged in hairdressing is LKP Widhi, located in Jember, East Java. Its trainees are generally aged 17–24 years and have no prior hairdressing experience, so the program prepares them for the

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workforce. Mastery of basic hairdressing skills, such as washing hair and drying it with a hair dryer, is important for trainees because these two skills are fundamental competencies in the professional beauty industry.

The role of LKPs as providers of vocational training is becoming increasingly strategic because course and training institutions serve as a bridge between individual needs and the demands of the world of work. Several studies published in JPPM show that the quality of training in nonformal institutions is largely determined by how institutions plan, implement, and evaluate practical learning, as seen in studies of sewing training management at a job training institute (Fachmi et al., 2023) and of the evaluation of a language training program at a job training institute using the CIPP model (R. Anggraeni et al., 2022). Other studies emphasise that skills education programs must be developed innovatively to remain relevant to community business opportunities (Hasdiansyah et al., 2024), and that skill-learning processes in communities can directly impact family income (Khamidah et al., 2024). These findings indicate that the main problem of nonformal training lies not only in the content being taught but also in the management of the learning process that enables trainees to master the skills genuinely.

A preliminary study showed that trainees at LKP Widhi tended to understand only the theory and to engage in practice only briefly. This led to a lack of confidence when applying the skills in practice because they feared making mistakes. This condition created a gap between theoretical understanding and real practice. Therefore, a learning strategy that could bridge theory and practice was needed. As an alternative solution, LKP Widhi selected and implemented an experiential learning strategy. This strategy is grounded in constructivist theory, which emphasises real experience as the main source of learning (Nurdiah et al., 2024). According to Kolb (as cited in Pamungkas & Sunarti, 2018), experiential learning is a four-stage process: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation (application or trial). This strategy not only increases trainees' active engagement but also helps them build deep understanding through reflection and direct application.

The gap between theory and practice also relates to the characteristics of nonformal training participants, who are generally young adult learners. Adult learners tend to learn more effectively when the material is linked to real experience, allows room for independent decision-making, and produces benefits that can be felt immediately. This view is in line with the adult learning model based on informal discussion, or *cangkrukan* (Roesminingsih et al., 2023), the heutagogical approach that positions learners as the determinants of their own learning process (Imsiyah et al., 2024), and the importance of self-regulation in learning according to social cognitive theory (F. Saragih, 2024). A transformative learning model in a nonformal setting has also been reported to influence changes in learners' behaviour (NurSekti & Sujarwo, 2025). Therefore, training strategies at LKPs need to be designed so that trainees do not merely receive demonstrations but also experience, reflect on, and make meaning of the practice they perform.

Conceptually, Kolb's experiential learning remains the most influential model in the study of experience-based learning, although the model continues to be re-examined. Through a systematic review, Morris (2020) proposed that concrete experience be understood as contextually rich, reflective observation as critical, abstract conceptualisation as context-specific, and active experimentation as pragmatic. Literature reviews in Indonesia also confirm that Kolb's four stages can enhance learners' engagement, understanding, and collaboration across education levels, although implementation requires adequate resources (Pinasti, 2023; Rahmi, 2024). Experiential learning has been shown to improve learning outcomes and skills in school settings (Badriyah & Hikmah, 2023; Nurdiah et al., 2024; Umkabu & Lestari, 2023). In vocational education, worksheets designed according to Kolb's stages helped students relate

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course material to real situations and were perceived as enjoyable and easy to understand (S. F. Pamungkas et al., 2021), while in nursing education, Kolb's cycle has been integrated with case analysis, mind maps, reflective journals, and peer simulations to build practical competence (Cheng et al., 2025).

Although research on experiential learning strategies has been widely conducted in formal education, most previous studies have focused on theoretical academic domains or general skills and have not explored in depth how the four-stage experiential learning cycle is managed in nonformal vocational training based on specific psychomotor skills such as hairdressing. Previous studies have not explicitly revealed how trainees' psychomotor skills progress from guided response to complex overt response, nor how the constraint of nonformal vocational trainees' limited prior experience is addressed in training management. This study at LKP Widhi Jember is therefore important to fill this research gap, while also providing empirical data on experience-based training management that is applicable and relevant to the needs of the professional beauty industry.

This study examines skill improvement primarily through Kolb's experiential learning theory, because the theory directly explains how experience is transformed into knowledge and action through the cycle of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation. In hairdressing training, the direct experience of washing and drying hair is the starting point for trainees to recognise real conditions, while reflection helps them identify mistakes and difficulties. The results of reflection are then processed into an understanding of working principles and procedures, which is subsequently tested again through practice. Thus, skill improvement occurs not only because trainees practice frequently but because each experience is processed into an understanding that can be used to improve their actions in the next practice (Kolb, as cited in A. H. Pamungkas & Sunarti, 2018).

Prastawa et al. (2024) also show that experiential learning is relevant to practical skills learning, as the strategy improved learners' physical cooking skills and encouraged them to develop new experiences. That study shows that an experience-based approach can support activities requiring hands-on practice, but its focus differs from that of the present study. This difference reinforces the need to examine how Kolb's experiential learning cycle is managed in hairdressing training at nonformal education institutions, particularly in the progression of skills from guided response to mechanism and complex overt response.

In cosmetology, research on practical learning strategies has also begun to develop. Wahjuningsih et al. (2024) developed MaHaKeTang as an innovative method for learning to style the *ukel tekuk* bun, indicating that hairstyling skills require specially designed learning steps. In vocational beauty education in Taiwan, Li et al. (2022) noted that makeup and hairdressing instruction is still dominated by teacher demonstration followed by student imitation, so more learner-centred methods are needed. Pepito and Saab (2024) also found that hairdressing students faced considerable difficulties in acquiring practical skills when opportunities for hands-on practice were limited, and that their abilities improved when assistance, modelling, and coaching for goal-setting and reflection were provided. However, these studies have not specifically mapped how the experiential learning cycle is managed as a training management system in hairdressing LKPs; this is the research gap that the present study addresses.

In this study, the experiential learning cycle is viewed as a mechanism that bridges theory and practice. Concrete experience allows trainees to gain direct motor experience; reflective observation helps them identify mistakes and determine which aspects need improvement; abstract conceptualisation transforms the results of reflection into principles or patterns of action; and active experimentation allows trainees to retest these principles in subsequent practice. This repeated sequence can logically explain improvements in trainees' skills, because

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trainees do not stop at imitating movements but use previous experience as a basis for improving the accuracy, independence, coordination, and efficiency of their movements. This progression is then analysed through three psychomotor levels of Bloom's taxonomy: guided response, mechanism, and complex overt response (Mahmudi et al., 2022).

Based on this background, the research question was formulated as follows: "How is experience-based training management implemented through an experiential learning strategy to improve the skills of hairdressing trainees at LKP Widhi Jember?" This study aims to describe how experience-based training management is implemented through an experiential learning strategy to improve the skills of hairdressing trainees at LKP Widhi Jember. The study is expected to provide information on applying experiential learning strategies to improve hairdressing trainees' skills and to serve as a reference for other course institutions seeking to implement similar learning strategies, thereby producing a generation that is not only theoretically knowledgeable but also competent in practical application. This study is important because it makes a practical contribution to developing learning strategies in nonformal education institutions.

METHOD

Research Type, Time, and Setting

This study used a descriptive qualitative approach to describe in-depth experience-based training management through the application of an experiential learning strategy to improve hairdressing trainees' skills. The study was conducted at LKP Widhi, located at Jl. Letjen S. Parman No. 174, Karangrejo, Sumbersari, Jember. The research site was determined purposively, and the institution was selected because it had implemented an experiential learning strategy in its learning activities. The research process comprised a preliminary study, data collection, data analysis, and report writing.

The study was conducted from May to August 2026. It included a preliminary study, observation of six daily learning cycles over two weeks of training, and follow-up interviews to confirm the data. A descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because the focus of the study was to understand a process, namely how the learning stages were managed and experienced by trainees, rather than to measure the magnitude of the effect of a treatment (Sahir, 2021). This approach enabled the researchers to capture the dynamics of interaction between the instructor and trainees, changes in the way trainees performed movements, and the meanings trainees attached to their practical experiences, as is common in studies of training management in nonformal education institutions (Fachmi et al., 2023; Imsiyah et al., 2024).

Research Subjects, Data Collection Techniques, and Instruments

The research subjects were selected using purposive sampling, that is, selecting subjects based on specific considerations relevant to the research objectives. The informants included five people: one manager of LKP Widhi, one instructor, and three hairdressing trainees who actively participated in the training and were directly involved in implementing the experiential learning strategy. Data were collected through three techniques: (1) participant observation, in which the researchers directly observed the practical activities and learning processes carried out by the trainees; (2) semi-structured interviews with key and supporting informants to explore their experiences, perceptions, and views regarding the implementation of the experiential learning strategy; and (3) a documentation study covering institutional archives, activity photographs, the institutional profile, and the organisational structure.

The criteria for selecting informants included direct involvement in the hairdressing training during the research period, involvement in all stages of experiential learning, and

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willingness to provide information openly. The selected trainees were beginner-level trainees with no work experience in hairdressing, so their skill development could be observed from the initial stage. The instructor was selected because they serve as both the designer and implementer of practical learning. In contrast, the manager was selected for their understanding of institutional policies, the provision of facilities, and training scheduling. Details of the informants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Informants

No.	Code	Informant Position	Number	Focus of Data Collected
1.	M	Manager of LKP Widhi (supporting informant)	1	Training policies, practice facilities, schedules, and institutional support
2.	I	Hairdressing instructor (key informant)	1	Planning and implementation of the experiential learning cycle, guidance, and practice assessment
3.	T1–T3	Hairdressing trainees (key informants)	3	Practical experiences, difficulties, reflection results, and skill development

The main instrument in this qualitative study was the researchers themselves, assisted by observation guidelines, interview guidelines, and a documentation form. The observation guidelines were developed based on two groups of indicators: indicators of the implementation of the four stages of experiential learning (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation, and active experimentation) and indicators of psychomotor levels (guided response, mechanism, and complex overt response) in hair washing and drying skills. The interview guidelines contained questions about training planning, practical experience, difficulties encountered, the reflection process, and perceived changes in skills. The documentation form was used to compile the institutional profile, organisational structure, training schedule, and photographs of practical activities.

Data Analysis and Trustworthiness

Data were analysed using Miles and Huberman's interactive model, which comprises data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Sugiyono, 2018). Data trustworthiness was then examined to increase confidence in the data obtained and ensure the research findings were credible (Moleong, 2018). Trustworthiness was established through prolonged engagement, persistent observation, and source and technique triangulation. Prolonged engagement was achieved by extending the researchers' presence in the field until the data were sufficient to meet the research objectives. Persistent observation was carried out by reviewing literature sources such as books, journals, and documents. The researchers conducted source triangulation by interviewing several informants with the same questions about the implementation of the experiential learning strategy, and technique triangulation by comparing information obtained through three techniques: interviews, observation, and documentation. These procedures were used to cross-check the data to ensure its credibility.

In the data reduction stage, field notes and interview transcripts were sorted according to the two research foci, namely the implementation of the experiential learning strategy and the improvement of trainees' skills. The reduced data were then displayed as narrative descriptions and matrices linking each stage of experiential learning to the observed psychomotor skill levels. Conclusions were drawn gradually, starting with tentative conclusions in each learning cycle, then verified through observation in subsequent cycles and confirmed with informants. This

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procedure ensured that the researchers' interpretation of trainees' skill development did not rely on a single observation but on patterns that emerged consistently throughout the training.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

1. Experiential Learning Strategy

Experience-based training management through the application of an experiential learning strategy in hairdressing training at LKP Widhi Jember began with the first stage, (1) concrete experience, in which the instructor directly involved trainees in the practice of washing hair and drying it with a hair dryer. Each trainee received their own practice tools and worked in pairs to support one another. Trainees directly practised washing hair, using a hair dryer, and performing hair sectioning (parting) techniques. Field observations showed that most trainees were enthusiastic about the practice because the hands-on method made it easier to understand basic hairdressing concepts. This activity also served as the foundation for developing initial skills before moving on to the next stage. This aligns with Logita and Winata (2020), who state that concrete experience involves learning from specific experiences and sensitivity to situations. The strategy was successfully implemented in the specific context of LKP Widhi Jember because hairdressing vocational training relies heavily on muscle memory and sensory and tactile sensitivity, which cannot be replaced by classroom theory alone. Because none of the trainees had prior hairdressing experience, a gap existed between conceptual understanding and real practice, and their initial hands-on work was often marked by hesitation. Under these conditions, intensive guidance and direct feedback from the instructor served as scaffolding, providing security and precise technical direction. A distinctive feature of hairdressing learning is the direct experience of holding tools, feeling hair texture, and carefully controlling temperature and air pressure. This finding contributes to the management of nonformal vocational training: providing individual practice facilities, combined with responsive instructor mentoring, is key to moving inexperienced trainees from initial helplessness toward mastery of vocational skills.

Next, in the second stage, (2) reflective observation, trainees were asked to reflect on and express the various difficulties they encountered during practice. Several trainees reported difficulties such as adjusting the hair dryer temperature and performing the blow-dry technique correctly. After practice, trainees reflected on their actions through group discussions, personal notes, or question-and-answer sessions with the instructor. This stage helped trainees recognise their mistakes, understand their shortcomings, and consolidate their previous experiences. Interview results showed that trainees felt more confident after identifying the aspects of their initial practice that needed improvement. This aligns with Lewin (as cited in A. H. Pamungkas & Sunarti, 2018), who states that reflective observation is the stage in which trainees reflect on or contemplate the experiences gained during learning.

The third stage, (3) abstract conceptualisation, involved trainees beginning to understand the importance of temperature settings and a comfortable tool position during the hair-drying process. They reconstructed more appropriate action patterns and working principles. At this stage, trainees began to connect their practical experience with broader theories or concepts; for example, they understood why particular products or techniques are used in hairdressing. The instructor provided theory-based explanations to strengthen their understanding. The data showed that trainees who reflected well also demonstrated stronger theoretical understanding. This aligns with Umkabu and Lestari (2023), who define abstract conceptualisation as the ability to transform concrete experience and reflection into broader theories or concepts.

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The final stage, (4) active experimentation, involved trainees applying the results of reflection and the concepts they had understood in further practice. All three trainees showed gradual skill development, increased self-confidence, and the ability to practice independently with progressively less instructor guidance. They then reapplied the knowledge and skills they had acquired to new situations or different cases; for example, they tried styling various hair models or using variations of drying techniques. This stage showed increased creativity and initiative among trainees. Observation results showed that all three trainees systematically went through the stages of the experiential learning strategy and demonstrated real skill development. This aligns with Mufida and Qosyim (2020), who state that active experimentation is the stage for testing previously learned theories. People learn better when they are actively involved in the learning process by applying acquired knowledge to real situations.

The experiential learning strategy at LKP Widhi Jember was implemented gradually through the four stages described by Kolb (as cited in A. H. Pamungkas & Sunarti, 2018), namely a process of creating knowledge through the transformation of experience, resulting from combining grasping and transforming experience. In detail, all three trainees followed a uniform learning procedure over a two-week training period, divided into six daily learning cycles of 120 minutes each. In the concrete experience stage, trainees practised hair washing and drying techniques using real tools, while the instructor served as a facilitator and observer, ensuring safety. In the reflective observation stage, trainees conducted self-evaluation. They guided discussions with the instructor for 15–20 minutes after practice to identify technical obstacles, such as incorrect hand positioning or temperature settings. Next, in the abstract conceptualisation stage, the instructor provided theoretical explanations and corrected working principles so that trainees could reconstruct their technical understanding. This stage then transitioned naturally into the active experimentation stage, in which trainees retested the improved techniques on different hair models. This cycle was repeated in every practice session, so all trainees underwent a structured, measurable learning transformation.

A summary of the management of each stage of experiential learning in hairdressing training at LKP Widhi is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Management of the Experiential Learning Stages in Hairdressing Training

Stage	Trainee Activities	Instructor's Role	Main Findings
Concrete experience	Practising hair washing, parting, and hair drying in pairs, each with their own tools	Facilitator, observer, and guarantor of work safety	Trainees were enthusiastic, but initial movements were still hesitant and stiff
Reflective observation	Expressing difficulties through discussion, personal notes, and 15–20 minutes of questions and answers after practice	Guiding discussion and providing feedback	Trainees recognised mistakes, for example in temperature settings and blow-dry technique.
Abstract conceptualization	Reconstructing patterns of action and working principles	Explaining theory and correcting working principles	Trainees understood the reasons for temperature settings, tool positioning, and product use
Active experimentation	Testing improved techniques on different hair models and in different situations	Gradually reducing guidance	Trainees became more independent and confident and began to be creative

Table 2 shows that the four stages were not separate activities but interconnected within a single training session. The most striking feature was the change in the instructor's role, from full mentor in the concrete experience stage to facilitator who gradually reduced guidance in the active experimentation stage. This pattern indicates that LKP Widhi's training management regulated not only the sequence of activities but also the intensity of mentoring according to

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trainees' readiness. The similarity of patterns among the three trainees indicates that the training procedure was applied uniformly. At the same time, differences in final attainment were more closely related to trainees' active engagement in reflection and their initiative in experimenting.

2. Skill Improvement

At the first level, (1) guided response, trainees were able to follow instructions well when washing hair, such as using shampoo correctly, performing circular and zigzag movements, and wrapping the towel. Trainees still required direct instruction because the movement patterns had not yet become habitual. From an experiential learning perspective, this condition is an important starting point because trainees gain motor experience that can be observed and evaluated. Repeated practice accompanied by feedback allowed trainees to compare their movements with the correct procedure so that errors could be corrected in the next cycle. Thus, guided response is not merely an imitation stage but a concrete experience that provides the foundation for subsequent skill development (Mahmudi et al., 2022).

Through practice, trainees reached the second level (2) mechanism, when they began to practice independently without the need for instructor guidance. This was evident in their ability to section hair (parting), hold the hair dryer, and dry hair systematically. After several practice sessions, trainees performed the tasks without direct instruction and became accustomed to holding the tools, sectioning hair, and drying it according to standard techniques. The data showed that all three trainees demonstrated independence in practice, indicating progression from guided response to mechanism. This result aligns with Bloom's theory (as cited in Mahmudi et al., 2022), which defines mechanism as the ability to make learned movements habitual so they appear skilful and confident. Such habitual movements are performed repeatedly without referring back to an example because they have been sufficiently practised.

At the advanced level, (3) complex overt response, trainees demonstrated higher ability through coordinated, quick, and precise movements. They washed and dried hair smoothly without appearing stiff. This highest skill level was demonstrated by trainees who were able to perform tasks carefully, efficiently, and with high coordination, carrying out several sequences of movements in hair washing and drying. Although not all trainees reached this level, those who actively reflected and took initiative in experimentation demonstrated satisfactory complex learning outcomes. This aligns with Bloom (as cited in Mahmudi et al., 2022), who states that complex overt response is the ability to perform motor movements or skills consisting of many complex patterns or steps smoothly, efficiently, and accurately.

Furthermore, the achievement of this level indicates that trainees have progressed beyond merely following procedural instructions toward demonstrating greater autonomy and proficiency in performing practical tasks. The integration of accuracy, coordination, and efficiency reflects the development of psychomotor competence through repeated practice, experiential learning, and continuous self-evaluation. These findings suggest that opportunities for independent experimentation and reflective practice are essential for facilitating the transition from basic skill acquisition to more advanced and integrated psychomotor performance. Trainees' skill development based on psychomotor levels is summarised in Table 3.

Table 3. Trainees' Psychomotor Skill Levels

Level	Observed Indicators	Remarks
Guided response	Following instructions when using shampoo, performing circular and zigzag movements, and wrapping the towel	Still requires direct instruction and supervision.

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Mechanism	Performing parting, holding the hair dryer, and drying hair systematically	Performed independently without direct instruction; attained by all three trainees
Complex overt response	Coordinating temperature, airflow angle, and combing movements smoothly, quickly, and precisely	Attained by trainees who actively reflected and took initiative in experimenting

Table 3 shows a clear shift from dependence on instruction toward independence and coordination of movement. All trainees moved beyond guided response and reached mechanism, whereas complex overt response was not attained evenly. This finding matters because it shows that repeated practice alone is not enough to bring all trainees to the highest skill level; the quality of reflection and willingness to try technique variations distinguished trainees' attainment. Mapping attainment according to the psychomotor domain is consistent with the view that skill-learning outcomes should be assessed in stages rather than solely on whether the final result is right or wrong (Magdalena et al., 2020, 2021).

In addition to these achievements, the results also identified two main constraints in training management. The first was limited instructor mentoring time, because the instructor had to observe and provide feedback to several trainees practising at the same time. The second was trainees' lack of prior experience; in early sessions, trainees tended to be hesitant, afraid of making mistakes, and needed more time to understand work procedures. These two constraints affected how quickly trainees progressed from one skill level to the next.

DISCUSSION

Skill improvement can be examined using the psychomotor taxonomy levels described by Mahmudi et al. (2022). The terms guided response, mechanism, and complex overt response conceptually derive from Simpson's (1972) development of the psychomotor domain taxonomy, which is often integrated into the extension of Bloom's taxonomy for the motor skills domain. Mahmudi et al. (2022) use this framework to categorise learners' motor proficiency levels, from basic imitation to independent and complex proficiency. In this study, the link between this theoretical taxonomy and the empirical findings at LKP Widhi Jember is explicitly visible in the stages of trainees' technical mastery. At the guided response level, the empirical findings show that trainees practised hair-washing movements by imitating the instructor's direct directions under detailed supervision. At the mechanism level, trainees demonstrated the ability to perform parting and hold the hair dryer reflexively and independently without instructor cues. Finally, at the complex overt response level, trainees coordinated variations in temperature, airflow angle, and combing movements simultaneously, quickly, and precisely. This link confirms that the stages of Simpson's/Bloom's psychomotor taxonomy empirically reflect trainees' learning progress in hairdressing training. Therefore, the relationship between experiential learning and skill improvement lies in transforming experience into procedural knowledge that can be used to improve and adjust actions.

The experiential learning strategy in hairdressing training at LKP Widhi Jember was implemented systematically through Kolb's four learning stages (as cited in A. H. Pamungkas & Sunarti, 2018). The four stages did not operate separately but formed a cycle of skill improvement. When trainees practised, they gained concrete experience; when they encountered difficulties, they reflected; the results of reflection helped build an understanding of procedures and working principles; and this understanding was then tested in the next practice. This cycle explains why trainees progressed from following instructions to independence, because each practice became a source of information for improving the next.

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Thus, the effectiveness of experiential learning in this study lies in the quality of the process of transforming experience, not merely in the presence of practical activities.

Trainees' attainment across these stages shows that skill improvement occurred mainly through repeated, reflective learning. Trainees initially needed guidance to perform movements, then used experience and reflection to form more stable work patterns, and finally coordinated movements more precisely, quickly, and efficiently. This pattern illustrates Kolb's mechanism: experience provides learning material, reflection reveals what does and does not work, conceptualisation provides a basis for understanding actions, and active experimentation tests improvements. This finding reinforces that skill improvement at LKP Widhi occurred not only because trainees practised frequently but because the practice took place within an experiential cycle that allowed for correction, meaning-making, and reapplication. Therefore, an experiential learning strategy can support trainees' skill improvement at LKP Widhi Jember. This aligns with Imsiyah et al. (2024), who, in JPPM (Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pemberdayaan Masyarakat), discussed heutagogical learning, which gives learners a central role in improving their skills and taking responsibility for their own learning by fostering independence, creativity, and motivation.

The findings at the concrete experience stage support Morris's (2020) revision of Kolb's model, which holds that meaningful concrete experience is contextually rich, actively involves learners, and contains elements of novelty and risk. Washing and drying hair on real models presents all of these elements: trainees deal directly with hair texture, tool temperature, and the model's responses, which cannot be replaced by verbal explanation. The hesitation and fear of making mistakes that emerged at the beginning of the training were part of the risk element that encouraged trainees to pay attention to the details of their movements. This aligns with Pamungkas et al. (2021), who found that vocational students find it easier to relate learning material to real-life situations when learning is designed according to Kolb's stages.

In this study, the reflective observation stage served as a feedback mechanism linking practice to improvement. A study on basic skills training showed that instructor-delivered feedback produced better skill performance than self-assessment using video recordings without guidance (Kerr et al., 2022). A similar pattern was evident at LKP Widhi: the 15–20-minute discussion after practice encouraged trainees to identify technical errors, such as hand positioning and temperature settings, before the instructor provided corrections. Thus, reflection not only improved understanding but also trained trainees to detect errors in their own movements, a prerequisite for independence at the mechanism level.

The abstract conceptualisation stage highlights the instructor's role in bridging experience and working principles. Theoretical explanations given after reflection helped trainees understand the reasons behind each procedure, so that improvements in movement were not a matter of trial and error. This process aligns with the constructivist view that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction with their experiences (Akhiruddin et al., 2020). It can also be understood as the formation of self-regulation, namely trainees' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their actions based on the standards they understand (F. Saragih, 2024). In the context of adult training, strengthening self-regulation is consistent with the principle of heutagogy, which encourages learners to take responsibility for their learning process (Imsiyah et al., 2024), and with the tendency of nonformal education learners to learn independently by utilising a variety of learning resources, including technology (Pradana et al., 2024).

The active experimentation stage shows that trainees did not stop at imitating procedures but began trying variations of drying techniques and hairstyles. This finding matters given criticism that cosmetology instruction often becomes trapped in a pattern of demonstration and imitation that limits learners' creativity (Li et al., 2022). Learning strategies that provide space

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for creative problem solving have also been reported to foster learners' creativity, skills, and creative thinking tendencies (Hsia et al., 2021). At LKP Widhi, this space for experimentation made trainees willing to take initiative, so that the skills they developed were not only procedurally accurate but also more adaptable to the variety of hair models they encountered.

The development of skills from guided response to complex overt response can also be understood within the broader framework of nonformal and informal education. A study of the inheritance of work culture as informal education in a woodworking community (Mustakim et al., 2025) positions real work practice as the main space for transmitting skills and work values. In addition, the success of skill development in nonformal education is influenced by the accuracy of learning needs analysis (M. I. Saragih & Lumbantoruan, 2025) and by the readiness of educators or tutors to manage learning (Saleha & Shofwan, 2025). The findings at LKP Widhi confirm the same point: trainees without prior experience need training that starts with basic skills, is repeated, and is guided by an instructor ready to provide responsive feedback.

From a training management perspective, these findings have several implications. First, training planning should organise practice sessions as complete cycles rather than as a mere series of demonstrations and exercises, so that time for reflection and conceptualisation is explicitly allocated in the schedule. Second, resource organisation should consider the instructor–trainee ratio, because feedback quality depends heavily on the availability of mentoring time. Third, training evaluation should use indicators related to psychomotor skill levels so trainees' progress can be monitored gradually. The importance of these management functions is also evident in studies of sewing training management at a job training institute (Fachmi et al., 2023), the evaluation of a training program at a job training institute using the CIPP model (N. Anggraeni et al., 2023), and managerial training for open high school teachers to improve their skills in managing learning activity places (Somantri et al., 2024).

Furthermore, improving trainees' skills has implications for economic empowerment. Basic hairdressing skills are initial capital for trainees to work in salons or to start their own businesses. Studies in JPPM on women's participation in training on processing economically valuable rubber seeds based on local wisdom in Jember (NurSekti & Sepiarti, 2023) and on the impact of entrepreneurial learning on family income (Khamidah et al., 2024) show that skills training can strengthen participants' economic conditions. Collaborative learning networks are also considered important for strengthening community economic empowerment (Hasdiansyah et al., 2025). Therefore, experience-based training at LKPs should not stop at technical mastery but should also be linked to trainees' work orientation and business opportunities after completing the training.

This study has several limitations. The small number of informants, limited to one instructor, three trainees, and one manager, means that the findings are better understood as an in-depth description of a single case rather than a generalisation to all hairdressing LKPs. The skills examined were also limited to hair washing and drying and did not include advanced skills such as cutting, colouring, or hairstyling. In addition, the two-week observation period did not allow the researchers to assess long-term skill retention or its application in the workplace. Future studies should involve more institutions and trainees, use standardised skill assessment rubrics, and combine qualitative approaches with quantitative or mixed-methods designs to examine the contribution of each stage of experiential learning to skill attainment.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that experience-based training management using an experiential learning strategy, implemented systematically through Kolb's four stages—concrete experience, reflection, conceptualisation, and active experimentation—was able to support the

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improvement of hairdressing trainees' skills at LKP Widhi Jember, particularly at the levels of guided response, mechanism, and complex overt response. Based on field findings, trainees progressed in mastering hair washing and drying techniques more independently, accurately, and efficiently, indicating that experience-based learning contributed to skill development during training. This cycle was characterised by hands-on practice with individual tools, guided reflection after practice, instructor reinforcement of working principles, and retesting of techniques in different situations with a gradual reduction in guidance. All trainees reached the mechanism level, whereas complex overt response was attained by trainees who actively reflected and experimented; the main constraints were limited instructor mentoring time and trainees' lack of prior experience. Therefore, this strategy is relevant for implementation in similar course institutions oriented toward practical skills. Institutions are advised to continue optimising instructor mentoring and to adapt teaching methods to the needs of trainees with little prior experience. Operationally, institutions should allocate time for reflection and conceptualisation in each practice session, adjust the instructor–trainee ratio, and use rubrics based on psychomotor levels to monitor trainees' progress.

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