



**Beyond Lectures:**  
**Insights from Business Discipline-**  
*(Reflections, Transformations, and the Human*  
*Side of Teaching)*

Chief Editor  
Dr. Azila Jaini



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**Patron:**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saunah Zainon  
(Rector, UiTM Cawangan Johor)

**Advisors:**

Dr. Nor Hazila Ismail  
(Deputy Rector, Academic Affairs, UiTM Cawangan Johor)

Cik Nurul Haida Johan  
(Head, Faculty of Business and Management, UiTM Cawangan Johor)

**Chief Editors**

Dr. Azila Jaini

**Editors**

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## THE IMPORTANCE OF PROJECT-BASED LEARNING IN UNDERSTANDING MANAGEMENT THEORIES THROUGH REAL-LIFE APPLICATIONS: UITM JOHOR CASE STUDY

*Muruga Chinniah, Nur Adilah Hj Saud, Mazlina Ismail*

### Introduction

The issue of pollution caused by solid waste is becoming increasingly serious due to low awareness of recycling and poor waste management practices. Improper disposal of waste pollutes the environment and negatively affects community health. Initiatives that promote recycling awareness are therefore crucial for environmental sustainability and community well-being.

Recognizing this, UiTM Johor Branch, Segamat Campus organized the program “Think Before You Throw, Let’s Recycle”. The initiative aims to increase awareness of recycling practices while giving students the opportunity to apply management theories learned in the Principles and Practice of Management (MGT420) course. Through this program, students strengthen their management skills and contribute directly to environmental sustainability.

Meanwhile, the program “Think Before You Throw, Let’s Recycle” aims to increase awareness of recycling practices as a way to protect the environment, reduce pollution, and cultivate a sense of responsibility towards the surroundings. Overall, the program also provides an opportunity for students to apply the management theories learned in the MGT420 course, particularly in the aspects of planning and implementing projects.



**Figure 1:** Students and lecturer actively collecting recyclable materials.  
(Source: Author’s personal collection)

Applying management skills (POLC – Planning, Organizing, Leading, and Controlling) in project implementation through Project-Based Learning (PBL) helps students understand management theories through real-life applications. This approach also supports the achievement of CLO3 for Principles and Practice of Management (MGT420) while aligning with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 12: Responsible Consumption and Production, by promoting responsible practices that reduce environmental impact from waste and materials.

## Project-Based Learning in Management Education

Project-Based Learning (PBL) is a student-centered approach that emphasizes learning through real-life projects, enabling students to connect theory with practice. Instead of purely theoretical learning, students engage in projects that solve authentic problems, fostering critical thinking, problem-solving, and teamwork (Amiri, 2025). In the context of MGT420, the recycling awareness program serves as an ideal PBL example. Students actively plan, organize, lead, and control a project that addresses a real campus waste and recycle problem. This hands-on experience helps them understand management concepts more deeply and see the direct impact of their actions.

### Application of POLC Management Skills

**Planning:** Students design the project objectives, set timelines, allocate resources, and strategize awareness campaigns for recycling. Proper planning ensures the program’s effectiveness and aligns with the goals of SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production.

**Organizing:** Students assign roles and responsibilities, coordinate teams, and manage resources efficiently. Effective organization ensures smooth execution and engagement of campus participants.

**Leading:** Leadership skills are honed as students motivate team members, communicate with the campus community, and guide participants in adopting sustainable practices.

**Controlling:** Students monitor progress, assess outcomes, and make adjustments where necessary. Evaluating the effectiveness of the awareness campaign ensures the project meets its objectives and maximizes environmental impact.

Through POLC, students experience firsthand how management functions operate in real-life contexts, bridging the gap between theory and practice (Handayani & Haeruddin, 2024).



**Figure 2:** Visual diagram showing how POLC skills link to project tasks and SDG 12 outcomes.

## **Literature Review: Project-Based Learning in Higher Education (2020–2026)**

Project-Based Learning (PBL) has gained significant attention in higher education as an effective teaching approach that connects theoretical knowledge with practical application. PBL is a student-centered learning method where students actively engage in projects that address real-world problems. This approach encourages students to construct knowledge through experience, collaboration, and problem-solving activities. According to Amiri (2025), PBL bridges the gap between theory and practice by allowing students to work on authentic tasks that require the application of academic concepts in real-life contexts.

In recent years, many universities have adopted PBL to enhance students' practical skills and career readiness. Handayani and Haeruddin (2024) reported that integrating project-based learning in higher education significantly improves students' practical competencies, communication skills, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities. Their study also revealed that students who participated in PBL activities demonstrated higher levels of job readiness and adaptability to workplace demands.

Zhang, X., et al. (2023) indicates that PBL improves students' learning outcomes and higher-order thinking skills. A meta-analysis conducted by researchers in 2023 found that project-based learning significantly enhances students' academic performance compared with traditional teaching approaches. The study also concluded that PBL effectively develops critical thinking, creativity, and collaboration skills, which are essential competencies in the 21st-century workforce.

Furthermore, PBL encourages independent learning and active participation among university students. A study published in 2025, according to Rahman, A., et al. (2025), highlighted that PBL contributes to students' learning independence by engaging them in activities such as project planning, scheduling, monitoring progress, and evaluating results. These processes help students develop responsibility and self-management skills while completing their projects.

Another important benefit of project-based learning is its ability to cultivate innovation and entrepreneurial competencies among students. Wang, Han, and Zhao (2024) explained that PBL allows students to develop innovative thinking and practical skills by engaging in collaborative projects that simulate real-world challenges. The approach encourages students to experiment with ideas, design solutions, and present their outcomes, which ultimately strengthens their problem-solving capabilities.

In addition, recent research highlights the importance of integrating real-world collaboration industry or community collaboration to significantly enhance students' future readiness and professional competencies. Through such projects, students gain hands-on experience that prepares them for the complexities of modern workplaces (Naseer et al., 2025).

Overall, researchers consistently demonstrate that project-based learning is a powerful pedagogical strategy in higher education. It not only strengthens students' understanding of theoretical knowledge but also enables them to apply management concepts in real-life situations. In courses such as Principles and Practice of Management (MGT420), PBL allows students to practice management functions such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling while managing real projects like recycling awareness campaigns. As a result, students develop both academic knowledge and practical skills that are essential for their professional and social responsibilities.

## Conclusion

Project-Based Learning is a powerful pedagogical strategy for teaching management concepts. The “Think Before You Throw, Let’s Recycle” program at UiTM Segamat illustrates how students can apply POLC skills to real-life projects that have tangible environmental and social impact. Supported by recent literature (2020–2026), PBL enhances students’ understanding of theoretical knowledge, develops essential skills, and fosters environmental awareness, aligning academic objectives with SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production. Students strengthen their understanding of management theories and apply POLC skills in a practical setting.

During the planning stage, students learned how to set project objectives, prepare activity schedules, and plan recycling awareness activities. In the organizing stage, they worked together by dividing tasks and coordinating responsibilities among team members. Through the leading process, students practiced communication and leadership skills while motivating their team and engaging with the campus community. Meanwhile, the controlling stage helped students monitor project progress and evaluate the success of the program. Overall, students felt that project-based learning made management theories more practical and easier to understand, while students improved teamwork, leadership, communication, and problem-solving abilities.

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