

Empowering the Kensiu Indigenous Community in Malaysia through Experiential Lifelong Learning: An Ethnographic Study

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Abstract

This study examines lifelong learning as a strategic framework for empowering the Kensiu indigenous community in Malaysia. As one of the smallest Orang Asli sub-ethnic groups, the Kensiu continue to face structural challenges, particularly economic marginalisation. In this study, lifelong learning is conceptualised as a continuous, inclusive, and community-oriented process that extends beyond formal education to encompass non-formal and informal learning across the life course. The study adopts experiential learning as its core approach, operationalised through community-based training initiatives. Experiential learning facilitates learning through direct experience, hands-on engagement, and reflective practice within authentic social and environmental contexts. An ethnographic research design was employed to generate in-depth insights into the Kensiu community's lived experiences, cultural practices, and indigenous knowledge systems. Data were collected through prolonged field engagement, participant observation, informal interviews, and sustained interaction with community members. The findings indicate that experiential lifelong learning enhances individual capabilities, strengthens economic resilience, and promotes self-reliance and social inclusion, while simultaneously supporting the preservation of indigenous identity and cultural values. The study concludes that empowering indigenous communities through lifelong learning requires culturally responsive, experience-based learning approaches and sustained collaboration among government agencies, educational institutions, and non-governmental organisations to ensure long-term and inclusive community development.

Keywords: Community empowerment; lifelong learning; experiential learning; indigenous knowledge