



# **Education of Self-Protection Skills for Kindergarten Students by Methods of Experiential Approach: A Case Study in Kindergartens in Dinh Hoa District, Thai Nguyen Province, Vietnam**

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## **Education of Self-Protection Skills for Kindergarten Students by Methods of Experiential Approach: A Case Study in Kindergartens in Dinh Hoa District, Thai Nguyen Province, Vietnam**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The issue of self-protection skills education for preschool children in preschools in mountainous areas is extremely urgent to help the children avoid dangers from the surrounding environment. By experiential approach, the process was built and self-protection skill activities were organized for student at preschool, then the effectiveness of the activity on children was evaluated so as to give recommendations to effectively organize self-protection skill education activities for preschool children in mountainous areas. A variety of research methods such as: interdisciplinary approach, process observation method (Leuven scale), interview method, mathematical statistical method (SPSS 20.0 software), case exercises, etc. were used. Research results show that children's feeling of comfort when participating in activities, children's participation in activities and the level of children's self-protection skills are average at the level from 2.1 to 2.3 on a 4-point scale. Kindergarten students in pre-schools in mountainous areas are mainly ethnic minority children, who are shy and are not fluent in Vietnamese. Because of the activities organized according to the experiential approach, the children could interact directly with the objects, so the children become more active, self-aware and proactive in acquiring knowledge and forming self-protection skills.

**Keywords:** Self-defense skills, experience, kindergarten, preschool, mountainous areas

### **INTRODUCTION**

Currently, the child injury rate in Vietnam is very high compared to other countries in Southeast Asia and 8 times higher than that of developed countries, especially in mountainous, remote and isolated areas. It is the lack of adult supervision, the distraction, carelessness, and lack of knowledge of the parents; the living environment in the community and family is not safe; lack of access to safe tools (helmets, swimming buoys, explosion-proof equipment, home first aid supplies, etc.). They are the main causes of the above situation. In addition, many children in mountainous areas are not fully equipped with necessary self-protection skills. Reports on child abuse have shown that many cases are caused by children's lack of skills, lack of attention from parents, leading to opportunities for bad people to perform their acts. In the years from 2015 to 2019, the whole country had 8,442 cases of child abuse detected with 6,432 children with sexually abused; 857 children with experience violence; 106 trafficked, kidnapped and appropriated acts; and 1,314 children of other cases. In particular, at the beginning of 2019, the number of abused children increased rapidly. With 1,400 children, on average, 7 children were abused every day in the whole country – this number could have actually been much higher because there have been a lot of cases that have not been detected and handled in a timely manner. In Thai Nguyen province, in 2020, there were about 165 children injured in accidents. In which, accidents caused by falls were 59 children, 8 children were burned, 14 children got traffic accidents, 4 children got food poisoning, 15 children were cut and stabbed by sharp objects, 6 children got choking on foreign objects, 20 children were bitten by animals, 28 children were drown, 4 children faced violence, 4 children got electric shock, and 3 children got other accidents. Therefore, educating preschool children with knowledge and skills to protect themselves against risks and dangers becomes an important task in the preschool education program, especially preschools in mountainous areas. Self-protection skills education for preschool children is a process of purposeful and planned influence by educators on children to help them identify and know how to cope with adverse situations and danger to keep themselves safe. Self-protection education for preschool children can be conducted through different ways and forms. However, based on the actual conditions and characteristics of preschool children in mountainous areas, experiential education is still the most effective educational method. Experience is the process of perceiving and discovering an object directly by interacting with the object through external physical manipulations (seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, etc.) and internal psychological processes (attention,

memory, thinking, imagination). They should match the psychological characteristics of preschool children. In the trend of educational innovation, organizing activities for children according to the experiential approach has become an indispensable requirement. Experience helps children promote positivity, self-discipline and self-control, thereby gaining knowledge and developing capacity. This method is also consistent with the "student-centered" teaching concept in preschool education today.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child requires that all children, free from discrimination of any kind, enjoy social services, have protection, grow up in a safe, hygienic, supportive, cared environment, as well as participating in social activities. However, today, many children still face unsafety risks every day without knowing how to identify and respond.

Many studies on children's self-protection skills have also shown that children have very little knowledge of sexual abuse or self-protection skills, personal safety skills (Runyon et al., 1998), or coping skills to abuse (Deblinger et al., 2001). Many children actually consider sexual touching to be acceptable (Wurtele S and Owen J, 1997). The cases of the abused students can be reduced by increasing their awareness, knowledge and comfort level when disclosing inappropriate sexual behavior. In the study "Child Sexual Abuse: From Prevention to Self-Protection", Maureen C. Kenny (2008), pointed out, for young children, parents needed to be taught self-protection skills. Therefore, schools and educators need to strengthen educational and propaganda activities for both children and parents. The authors also believe that, when teaching children about traffic safety, sex safety or fire safety, it is essential to teach them the form to be safe for themselves. These are essential self-protection skills. Cheryl Poche et al. (1988) also have studies on self-protection skills for children from the risk of abduction such as: "Teaching self-protection techniques – protection to children using television", "Teaching self-protection to young children", etc. Most of these studies show skills; however, they are not specific to different young people according to age stages associated with practice.

In Vietnam, the theory of protection skills, methods of training self-protection skills are also comprehensively mentioned in a number of studies by the authors Nguyen Thanh Binh (2007), Nguyen Thanh Lam - Nguyen Tu Phuong (2017). Most of these studies have generalized the necessity of educating children on self-protection skills, provided the content, methods and forms of self-protection skills education for children, but have not been specific to each child according to age stages and areas such as urban, rural, mountainous, etc.

Self-protection skill education for 5-6-year-old children according to an experiential approach is to implement an integrated educational perspective, which is also a process of synchronously integrating elements of the educational process as a complete object. The study of educating children on self-protection skills according to an experiential approach has important implications in terms of both theory and practice.

In this study, the authors propose a process to organize self-protection skills education activities for preschool children 5-6 years old according to the experience approach in preschool on the basis of evaluate the current situation of self-protection skills of children and recommend appropriate solutions.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey was conducted on the effectiveness of self-protection skills education for preschool children 5-6 years old in preschools in Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province, Vietnam: evaluation of comfort and level of children's participation in self-protection skills education activities of 5-6 years old children according to the experiential approach by applying the processed child observation system of Laevers, Moons & Declerq, 2012 and inclusion indicators by Booth & Ainscow, 2016; the study evaluates children's self-protection skills in terms of perception, performance, self-evaluation of results and application of experience in other activities. Collected data are processed using SPSS software program version 20.0 and Paired Sample Test to check the difference between children's self-protection skills before and after organizing educational activities according to the experiential approach as well as analyze the Pearson r correlation coefficient between the survey variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### **Determining the process and organizing self-protection skills education activities for preschool children at 5-6 years old according to the experiential approach in preschools in Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province, Vietnam**

Based on the characteristics of 5-6-year-old preschool children in mountainous areas and based on the experiential learning process of David Kolb (1984) inheriting the research on organizing educational activities in the direction of experience of Hoang Thi Phuong (2018), the process of organizing self-protection skills education activities for preschool children 5-6 years old is determined according to the experience approach at preschool including 4 stages:

\* Stage 1: Practical experience.

At this stage, children apply the knowledge and experience they have gained about self-protection skills into practical activities that they directly participate in.

- Introduce the activity and the purpose of the activity.
- Disseminate experiential tasks for the children.

- Organize activities for the children to experience the surrounding environment, toys, and teaching aids according to the purpose of educating self-protection skills that teachers aim at.

\* Stage 2: Analysing, exchanging, experience sharing

At this stage, the children analyze, respond, and share knowledge and skills about self-protection gained through experience. The children's thinking process will go from a low level, by describing information, commenting to a higher level such as finding out causes, explaining phenomena, etc. The teachers ask questions for the children in order that they could reveal new knowledge and skills that are gradually forming during and after experiencing.

- The teacher uses the question system to talk to the children about the activity they have gone through. The question is directed at: Exploiting relevant experiences about the phenomena; Objects causing strong emotions to the children; The knowledge, skills and attitudes young people have acquired; Progress of activities the children experience; Relationships and situations that occurred; etc.

- The teacher organizes in the form of individual play and competition to create opportunities for the children to respond to their experiences, thoughts, feelings and desires when participating in experiential activities in the next time.

- The teacher uses supporting media to recall the memory of play activities such as pictures, videos, stories.

\* Stage 3: Forming new experiences

- The teacher encourages the children to talk about self-protection experiences gained through experiential activities.

- The teacher uses pictures, illustrations, problem situations and use orientation techniques to stimulate interest and inculcate self-protection experiences for the children.

\* Stage 4: Applying experience

- Collaborate with young parents to create many opportunities for the children to exchange and apply self-protection experiences into practice at home.

- Organize the opportunity for the children to draw pictures of things and events they remember in experiential activities; composing, telling stories about gadgets and toys; about the object or phenomenon that the children have an impression or about the progress of the experiential activity.

- Provide open situations for the children to think and apply self-protection skills in practice.

Self-protection skills education for the children follows an experiential approach that follows a logical sequence of 4 stages. The result of the previous stage is the starting point, the fulcrum of the next stage. The time frame for each stage varies depending on the cognitive characteristics and experiences of the children. Similarly, children's self-protection skills are formed and trained.

After determining the process of organizing self-protection skills education activities according to the experiential approach in preschool, specific educational plans were designed and then implement them on the children. In this study, the authors organized educational activities for groups of abuse prevention skills and kidnapping prevention skills according to an experiential approach in preschool.

#### **Evaluation of the effectiveness of self-protection skills education activities for preschool children 5-6 years old according to the experiential approach at preschool**

The authors evaluated the effectiveness of self-protection skills education activities for preschool children 5-6 years old according to the experience approach in preschool based on the evaluation of comfort and participation in activities of the children; evaluation of the children's level of self-protection skills before and after the test.

The evaluation was based on observational progress and was conducted on 5-6-year old 79 children (with 83% of children from ethnic minorities) in 3 preschools in Dinh Hoa district, Thai Nguyen province, Vietnam. The time to organize testing activities was 3 weeks in which 3 activities per week.

#### **Evaluating the feeling of comfort and participation of 5-6 year old preschool children in self-protection skills education activities according to the experiential approach**

\* Evaluate the children's comfort, with 5 indicators:

- Have facial expressions, gestures, and eyes that show happiness and interest in the environment and people around.

- Quick response, vivacious, always excited, actively participating in activities.

- Be comfortable, without anxiety, fear, or agitation.

- Confidently communicate and easily connect with teachers and friends; receive opinions and concerns of people around; know how to comfort and offer to help friends.

- Confidently express themselves naturally and have their own opinions.

\* Evaluate children's participation in activities, with 4 indicators:

- Highly focused and absorbed in the activity/task.

- Be proactive and active when starting or continuing activities, passionately participating in activities without the encouragement of others.

- The children try to take action to get the best results; focus on completing the task to the end.

- Actively switch to other activities when completing their tasks.

To evaluate children's feeling of comfort and participation when participating in self-protection skills education activities in the usual form with self-protection skills education activities according to the prescribed experiential approach in the above 4-stage process, the authors observed the children's activity process. In which, with the total number of children surveyed, the level is selected based on the expressions included in the evaluation content: Level 1 (very good): Children have 80%-100% expression of the indicators in the criteria; Level 2 (good): Children have 60%-<80% expression of the indicators in the criteria; Level 3 (improving): Children have 40% - < 60% expression of the indicators in the criteria; Level 4 (effort needed): Children have < 40% of the indicator's expression in the criteria.

The results obtained are as follows:

**Table 1: Children's feeling of comfort and participation**

|                    |         | Organized in the usual form |                      | Organized by experiential approach |                      |
|--------------------|---------|-----------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------|
|                    |         | Children's comfort          | Active participation | Children's comfort                 | Active participation |
| N                  | Valid   | 79                          | 79                   | 79                                 | 79                   |
|                    | Missing | 0                           | 0                    | 0                                  | 0                    |
| Mean               |         | 2.7595                      | 2.7848               | 2.2532                             | 2.1266               |
| Std. Error of Mean |         | 0.10383                     | 0.11768              | 0.10880                            | 0.11446              |
| Median             |         | 3.0000                      | 3.0000               | 2.0000                             | 2.0000               |
| Mode               |         | 3.00                        | 3.00                 | 2.00                               | 2.00                 |
| Std. Deviation     |         | 0.92286                     | 1.04600              | 0.96700                            | 1.01738              |

Comparing the level of comfort and comfort of the children when participating in activities, both Mode and Median with the usual form of organizing activities are at level 3, after organizing activities according to the experience approach that has been in level 2.

In addition, it can be found that when the children's comfort level in the activity is positively correlated with the children's participation in the activity (before the test, the children's feeling of comfort has a mean = 2.7595, after the test, a mean = 2.2532; the children's participation before the test has a mean = 2.7848, after the test, a mean = 2.1266). That means when the children are happy, comfortable and confident in activities, the level of active participation in activities will increase and vice versa. This also shows the advantage of the experiential approach in early childhood education. It is thanks to the direct participation with the collective nature of the activities organized according to the experiential approach that children get a sense of joy and comfort to participate in active activities (Table 2).

**Table 2: The frequency of occurrence at levels**

| Level   | Children's comfort in activities    |  | Children's participation in activities |  |
|---------|-------------------------------------|--|--|--|
|         | Organized in the usual form<br>N(%) | Organized by experiential approach<br>N(%) | Organized in the usual form<br>N(%)    | Organized by experiential approach<br>N(%) |
| Level 1 | 10 (12.7)                           | 21 (26.6)                                  | 12 (15.2)                              | 25 (31.6)                                  |
| Level 2 | 15 (19)                             | 25 (31.6)                                  | 17 (21.5)                              | 30 (38.0)                                  |
| Level 3 | 38 (48.1)                           | 25 (31.6)                                  | 26 (32.9)                              | 13 (1916.5)                                |
| Level 4 | 16 (20.3)                           | 8 (10.1)                                   | 24 (30.4)                              | 11 (13.9)                                  |

Using the Paired Sample Test, it was found that the children's feeling of comfort when participating in self-protection skill education activities according to the experiential approach compared with the usual form for Sig results (P-Value) = 0.000; children's participation in the activity (P-Value) = 0.000 and all < 5%. Therefore, it could be asserted that there is a difference in the results after the test compared to before the test. This represents a significant change in the psychology of children when participating in educational activities according to the experiential approach because the characteristics of children in these preschools are mainly ethnic minorities, the students are still young, shy, and have lack of confidence. Activities following the experiential approach help children directly manipulate objects, toys and the surrounding environment, so children's feelings of joy are also expressed naturally.

**Evaluate the level of self-protection skills of preschool children 5-6 years old**

The level of self-protection skills of 5-6-year-old preschool children in preschool is expressed through 4 criteria with the following indicators:

\* Evaluate children's awareness of self-protection actions to be performed in the activity

- Identify unsafe actions in operation.
- + Can say the name of the unsafe action and the name of the self-protective action that needs to be taken when asked.
- + Can talk about consequences/harms of unsafe actions when asked.
- Be able to state the requirements and meaning of self-protection actions to be taken when asked.
- Can say how to show self-protective actions when asked.
- \* Evaluate the results of children's self-protection actions in the activity
- Actively take self-protection actions when seeing a risk of losing their own safety or doing it when listening to instructions and explanations.
- Take prompt self-protection action upon awareness of unsafety or when required.
- Perform self-protection actions correctly, accurately and competently.
- Persevere in self-protection actions until completion or with the help of teachers and friends.
- \* Children evaluate performance.
- Self-evaluate the results of self-protection actions of themselves and the group.
- Evaluate the performance of you/your group.
- Can talk about the causes leading to the results of the activities of themselves and the group; Accept and express emotions consistent with individual and group performance.
- Draw new lessons and experiences for yourself after finishing the activity or under the suggestion of teachers and friends.
- \* Evaluate how children apply self-protection skills experiences in different life situations
- Actively apply experiences in different activities in daily life.
- Use experience appropriate to the characteristics of the activity.
- Flexibility in applying experience to different situations, can change the order of steps or add-remove actions accordingly.
- Effectively apply the experience gained in other activities.

By using case exercises and observing children's participation in activities, the results are as follows:  
We measure children's skills on 4 criteria: on perception, on performance results, on evaluation of results and on application of experience (with the same evaluation as above).

**Table 3: Evaluation of results and on application of experience**

|                    |         | Organized in the usual form |         |          |         | Organized by experiential approach |         |          |         |
|--------------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|----------|---------|------------------------------------|---------|----------|---------|
|                    |         | Perceive                    | Perform | Evaluate | Apply   | Perceive                           | Perform | Evaluate | Apply   |
|                    | Valid   | 79                          | 79      | 79       | 79      | 79                                 | 79      | 79       | 79      |
|                    | Missing | 0                           | 0       | 0        | 0       | 0                                  | 0       | 0        | 0       |
| Mean               |         | 2.7722                      | 2.7468  | 3.0506   | 2.8734  | 2.1772                             | 2.2532  | 2.3165   | 2.3038  |
| Std. Error of Mean |         | 0.10497                     | 0.10880 | 0.11522  | 0.11446 | 0.11216                            | 0.11174 | 0.11185  | 0.11157 |
| Median             |         | 3.0000                      | 3.0000  | 3.0000   | 3.0000  | 2.0000                             | 2.0000  | 2.0000   | 2.0000  |
| Mode               |         | 3.00                        | 3.00    | 4.00     | 4.00    | 2.00                               | 2.00    | 2.00     | 2.00    |
| Std. Deviation     |         | 0.93300                     | 0.96700 | 1.02405  | 1.01738 | 0.99691                            | 0.99316 | 0.99414  | 0.99169 |

Regarding the average value of the criteria for evaluate children in the normal way, the children's achievement level ranges from M = 2.7722 to M = 3.0506, while according to the experience approach, the children's level of achievement is from M= 2.1772 to M=2.3165; Median of the levels before the test in the usual form is level 3 (improving), after the test it increases to level 2 (good).

Regarding the frequency of occurrence of the number of children achieving at the evaluation levels (N/%), the results are shown in the table below:

**Table 4: The frequency of occurrence**

| Level   | Perception No. (%) |                                    | Result of self-protection action No. (%) |                                    | Children self-evaluation results No. (%) |                                    | Children use experience No. (%) |                                    |
|---------|--------------------|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|
|         | Usual form         | Following an experiential approach | Usual form                               | Following an experiential approach | Usual form                               | Following an experiential approach | Usual form                      | Following an experiential approach |
| Level 1 | 11(13.9)           | 24(30.4)                           | 10(12.7)                                 | 20(25.3)                           | 9(11.4)                                  | 19(24.1)                           | 9(11.4)                         | 18(22.8)                           |
| Level 2 | 12(15.2)           | 26(32.9)                           | 14(17.7)                                 | 30(38.0)                           | 12(15.2)                                 | 27(34.2)                           | 19(24.1)                        | 31(39.2)                           |
| Level 3 | 40(50.6)           | 20(25.3)                           | 36(45.5)                                 | 18(22.8)                           | 24(30.4)                                 | 22(27.8)                           | 24(30.4)                        | 18(22.8)                           |
| Level 4 | 16(20.3)           | 9(11.4)                            | 19(24.1)                                 | 11(13.9)                           | 34(43.0)                                 | 11(13.9)                           | 27(34.2)                        | 12(15.2)                           |

The Paired Sample Test shows that all of the criteria of children's self-protection skills all give Sig results (P-Value) = 0.000 < 5%. This confirms a significant difference in the results before and after applying the test.

The results summarize 4 aspects of perception, performance results, children self-evaluation results, and children applying experience to practice as follows: after the experiment, organize educational activities on self-protection skills following the experiential approach, the number of children achieving results at level 1 and 2 accounts for  $\geq 58.2\%$ , level 4 is only  $\leq 15.2\%$ , while if it is organized in the usual form, levels 1 and 2 only reach  $\leq 30.4\%$ ; level 4 ranges from 20.4% to 43%.

We also analyzed the correlation between the variables using the Pearson correlation coefficient in terms of awareness, performance, evaluation and application achieved on children after the test:

**Table 5: The correlation between the variables**

|             |                     | Perception | Result of self-protection action | Children self-evaluation results | Children applying experience |
|-------------|---------------------|------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Perception  | Pearson Correlation | 1          | 0.433**                          | 0.564**                          | 0.593**                      |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     |            | 0.000                            | 0.000                            | 0.000                        |
|             | N                   | 79         | 79                               | 79                               | 79                           |
| Performance | Pearson Correlation | 0.433**    | 1                                | 0.320**                          | 0.311**                      |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.000      |                                  | 0.004                            | 0.005                        |
|             | N                   | 79         | 79                               | 79                               | 79                           |
| Evaluation  | Pearson Correlation | 0.564**    | 0.320**                          | 1                                | 0.655**                      |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.000      | 0.004                            |                                  | 0.000                        |
|             | N                   | 79         | 79                               | 79                               | 79                           |
| Application | Pearson Correlation | 0.593**    | 0.311**                          | 0.655**                          | 1                            |
|             | Sig. (2-tailed)     | 0.000      | 0.005                            | 0.000                            |                              |
|             | N                   | 79         | 79                               | 79                               | 79                           |

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results of the correlation analysis showed that sig.<5% , that means the evaluation criteria in the study were closely correlated with each other; the value of the correlation coefficient  $r>0$ , so when one aspect of the children's evaluation increases, the other evaluation aspects also increase. Specifically:

Perception has a strong correlation, proportional to the children's ability to perform self-protective actions ( $r=0.433^{**}$ ), with the skill of self-evaluation of performance ( $r= 0.564^{**}$ ) , with the skill of applying experience ( $r=0.593^{**}$ );

Performance has a strong correlation, proportional to perception ( $r=0.433^{**}$  ), with self-evaluation skills of performance ( $r=0.320^{**}$  ), with skill in applying experience ( $r. =0.311^{**}$ );

Evaluation of results has a close correlation, proportional to perception ( $r=0.564^{**}$ ), skill to perform actions ( $r=0.320^{**}$ ), and skill to apply experience ( $r= 0.655^{**}$ );

Application has a strong correlation, proportional to perception ( $r=0.593^{**}$ ), with skills to perform actions ( $r=0.311^{**}$ ), with skills to self-evaluate the performance results ( $r= 0.655^{**}$ );

## CONCLUSION

The issue of educating children on self-protection skills has been studied by many domestic and international scientists. The works focus on research on the causes, nature and components of the process of organizing educational activities for children in the direction of general research for children. In this article, we focus on educating self-protection skills through an experiential approach for preschool children aged 5-6 years in preschools in mountainous areas, where many children are ethnic minorities in order to be both associated with the reality and suitable with the psychosocial characteristics of the child. That means we consider experience as both the form and the purpose and goal of the activity. All the orientations in the design and organization of activities are both aimed at achieving the goals of self-protection skills education and at the same time achieving the goals of experiential education.

The survey results of children's feeling of comfort and participation in self-protection skills education activities, surveying the level of children's self-protection skills before the test showed that most of the children surveyed were at a low level 3 (improving - according to the rating scale) and level 4 (effort needed - according to the rating scale). After the experiment with activities following the experiential approach, the number of children at level 4 decreased, and the number of children at level 1 and 2 increased significantly.

From the above results, we would like to propose some recommendations to improve the quality of self-protection skills education for children in preschools in mountainous areas. Firstly, strengthen the organization of educational activities in preschools according to the experiential approach. Second, teachers of preschools need to be fully trained in the process of organizing activities according to the experiential approach with appropriate evaluation methods. Third, schools should strengthen facilities, teaching aids, toys for children to organize activities according to effective experiential approach. Finally, schools do a good job of mobilizing children to go to school regularly so that skills are practiced regularly and continuously.

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