The Service Program Design as A Model for Preparing Future Teachers' Interpersonal Skills: A Descriptive Study

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Article Info	Abstract
	The focus of this descriptive study is to depict the implementation of the Service Program Design (SPD) course offered by the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) in a university in Yogyakarta. The study focuses on describing the course structure, objectives, weekly meetings, and highlight activities conducted throughout the semester. Lesson plans, assignments, students' reflections, and interviews with lecturers and eight chosen students (picked based on questionnaire findings from a prior study) were among the methods used to gather data. Through a service-oriented framework that prioritizes creativity, collaboration, and reflection, the Service Program Design course was established to foster professional development. While this paper focuses on describing the implementation of the course, findings from a related study with alumni have indicated that the SPD course indeed contributed to the development of specific interpersonal skills among graduates.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Service-based learning has become an essential approach in higher education, emphasizing learning through authentic community engagement and reflective practices. As Eyler (2002) asserts, reflection serves as "the hyphen that links service and learning," emphasizing that structured reflective activities, such as journals, discussions, or portfolios are vital for transforming community experience into academic and civic learning. Similarly, Schön (2017) concepts of reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action explain how students can learn both during and after field engagement by testing their assumptions in practice and integrating insights into professional understanding.

Moreover, interpersonal skills are increasingly required in today's workplaces for professional development, and this need is especially relevant in the teaching profession. According to Pianta (2016), the ability of teachers to establish and maintain high-quality interactions with students represents an essential aspect of effective teaching that supports both academic and social-emotional growth. Ansari, Hofkens, & Pianta (2020) also emphasize that teachers who consistently demonstrate positive interpersonal behaviors are more likely to foster long-term academic achievement and positive behavioral outcomes in their students. Similarly, Longobardi, Prino, Marengo, & Settanni (2016) found that warm and supportive teacher-student relationships contribute to better school adjustment, motivation, and emotional well-being among learners.

In teacher education, such approaches help students connect academic knowledge with real-world applications, nurturing not only pedagogical competence but also social awareness and interpersonal understanding. Strong interpersonal skills enable teachers to build supportive and

trusting classroom climates that increase student engagement, motivation, and academic achievement (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021; Zhang, 2022). These skills also improve classroom management and reduce behavioral problems by fostering positive teacher-student interactions, and they support professional growth through collaboration with colleagues, which in turn enhances teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Xie, Sui, & Liu, 2023).

The Service Program Design (SPD) course in the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP) at *Universitas Sanata Dharma* embodies this principle. It was first established in 1991. It integrates professional development, creativity, entrepreneurship, and service orientation into a single experiential learning course. Despite its long-standing presence in the curriculum, limited academic documentation describes how the course is structured and implemented. Therefore, this study aims to describe the implementation of the SPD course, focusing on its structure, learning objectives, meeting sequence, learning activities, and assessment mechanisms.

1.1. Interpersonal Skills Development & Training

Robbins & Hunsaker (2014) contend that although some academics assert that interpersonal skills are innate traits that are difficult to change and therefore cannot be taught, there is compelling evidence that interpersonal skills can be learned and developed over time. In order to ensure that only participants who had attained interpersonal competency through the SPD Course were included in further analysis, the researcher uses Johnson's theory (1987) about seven phases in the process of acquiring interpersonal skills: (1) awareness of the need for skills, (2) understanding and (3) sequencing the required behaviors, (4) ongoing practice, (5) receiving feedback,(6) experiencing success as motivation, and (7) integrating the skills until they become automatic behaviors.

Johnson (1987) also outlined five important aspects of interpersonal skills training. First, cooperative learning, which has been shown to improve achievement, retention, creativity, and positive attitudes. Second, the teacher's role is crucial in determining the success of group work through classroom management, emphasizing main ideas, enforcing rules, and modeling positive behavior. Third, a learning contract that summarizes what has been learned and the students' personal commitments. Fourth, a healthy competitive environment between groups, with clear rules and a focus on enjoyment, not rivalry. Fifth, evaluation, which can be criteria-based or normative, as long as it does not create competition within the group.

These five criteria are used to determine whether the SPD Course's activities have satisfied Johnson's fundamental requirements for the development of interpersonal skills. Interpersonal abilities are seen by some scientists as deeply ingrained personalities that are difficult to modify. On the other hand, other scientists think it is impossible to teach interpersonal skills. According to Robbins and Hunsaker (2014), while no evidence shows that training can instantly turn every manager with poor interpersonal competence into an exceptional leader, this should not determine whether interpersonal skills are teachable; rather, strong evidence indicates that such skills can indeed be learned and developed over time.

1.2. Experiential Learning Model as Interpersonal Skills Development Training

There is an ongoing discussion about whether interpersonal skills are purely innate or can be deliberately developed. Contemporary research favors the view that interpersonal competencies can be enhanced through carefully designed learning interventions. Empirical evidence indicates that structured training programs that focus on communication, self-awareness, and professional performance. Consequently, many organizations have allocated substantial resources to interpersonal skills development as part of workforce and leadership training (Boyatzis, et al., 2012; (Mata, et al., 2021).

Although lecture remains a common approach in higher education, it is more effective for transmitting conceptual knowledge than for shaping applied behavioral skills. Developing practical competence requires integrating conceptual instruction with active practice, timely

feedback, and repeated opportunities to apply skills in realistic contexts. Experiential learning therefore offers a more suitable framework for cultivating interpersonal abilities that transfer to authentic settings (Boyatzis, et al., 2012).

According to Robbins and Hunsaker (2014), Kolb (1984) created a model that includes the majority of these learning elements about Kolb's experiential learning models, as seen in Figure 2 below:
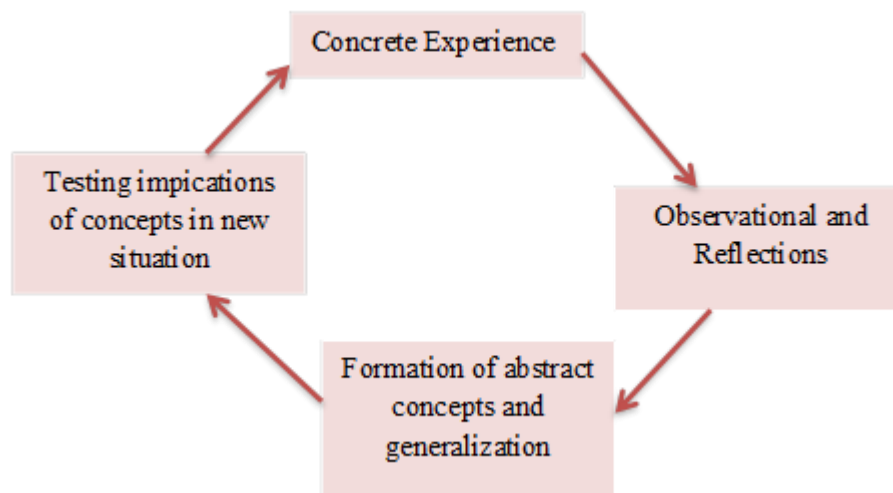

Figure 2 Kolb's Experiential Learning models
Source: David A. Kolb, Irwin M. Rubin, and James M. McIntyre, *Organizational Pyschology: Readings on Human Behavior in Organizations*, 4th ed.

According to Kolb model (Kolb & Kolb, 2017; Kolb & Kolb, 2022), ELT conceptualizes learning as a cyclical sequence of (1) Concrete Experience (active participation in a new experience); (2) Reflective Observation (examination of the experiences); (3) Abstract Conceptualization (integration of conclusions into workable theories based on the new experiences and formation of abstract concepts and generalizations); (4) Active Experimentation (application an implication of the theories and the concepts in new situations). The Service Program Design (SPD) Course's emphasis on real-life engagement, attentive observation, and iterative application aligns with this cycle; students gain interpersonal skills by participating in authentic interactions, reflecting on outcomes, forming conceptual understandings, and testing new behaviors in subsequent situations.

Kolb's perspective is consistent with Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which highlights observational learning, modeling, and practice as central mechanisms for acquiring behavioral skills (Bandura, 2018). In combination, these frameworks indicate that experiential, social, and reflective components are central to effective interpersonal skills development which are producing gains in empathy, communication effectiveness, classroom climate, and professional collaboration that are relevant to teacher practice and ongoing professional growth (Xie & Derakhshan, 2021).

2. RESEARCH METHODS

The Service Program Design (SPD) course implementation was the main focus of this study, which used a descriptive qualitative design. A descriptive study aims to systematically describe the characteristics or patterns of a phenomenon without testing casual relationships, while qualitative descriptive designs provide comprehensive, low-inference summaries of participants' experiences, making them appropriate for exploratory educational research (Aggarwal & Ranganathan, 2019;

Villamin, Lopez, Thapa, & Cleary, 2024). The descriptive technique was chosen because it enables a thorough and comprehensive depiction of the course's implementation, including its goals, framework, educational activities, and evaluation methodology (Villamin et al., 2024). This method was deemed to be appropriate for comprehending how the course was developed and carried out in its natural environment without changing variables or putting theories to the test.

Data were collected through non-participant observation, interviews (that involved two course lecturers and several alumni who had previously participated in the SPD course), and document analysis. The interviews with the alumni conducted in this research involved two course lecturers and several alumni who had previously participated in the SPD course and were selected based on the findings of a previous study that explored whether the SPD course fostered students' interpersonal skills. Document analysis covered materials such as the course syllabus, weekly schedules, assignment guidelines, and student outputs that were categorized and analyzed according to several key aspects: course objectives, structure, weekly meeting content, learning activities, and assessment system.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
3.1 Overview of the SPD Course

The SPD course was conducted once a week for 15 meetings (with one meeting for midterm and one meeting for final examination) (see Table 1). The classroom atmosphere was designed to resemble a professional working environment. Students were required to dress formally every week and follow a corporate-style structure with assigned positions such as President Director, General Manager, and Group Leaders. The main purpose of the SPD course was to cultivate professional attitudes, teamwork, creativity, and service orientation through experiential learning activities. On the first day, the lecturers clarified that SPD was not a typical course that taught the students' academic subjects. In the SPD course, students gained practical experience in creating and managing an English language education-related service program. In addition, the lecturers clarified that SPD would involve providing the students with a number of challenging tasks and assignments during the semester. Nevertheless, the lecturer did not mention the details of the assignment although they provided a brief explanation about the purpose of the course and the general schedule in the syllabus through PowerPoint. The SPD course (KPE 477) was described as a program designed to enhance the overall competence of ELESP graduates at Universitas Sanata Dharma. Its primary purpose was to equip students not only for careers as professional educators but also for broader professional pathways by integrating foundational entrepreneurship and managerial concepts into the curriculum. Through this course, students were guided to develop skills in designing training service programs, proposing these programs to institutions or companies, and executing them in real contexts (Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA), 2011, p. 3, as cited in Sugi, 2016).

Prior to the commencement of the course, the lecturers instructed students to bring a personal seal. This seal was later used to authorize the individual learning contracts that each student drafted independently. The use of these self-written and formally endorsed learning contracts appeared to contribute to the development of interpersonal skills throughout the SPD class. As emphasized by Johnson (1987), learning contracts foster accountability and self-directed behavior by requiring learners to articulate, commit to, and evaluate their own goals which is an approach that strengthens interpersonal responsibility and collaboration. Accordingly, Brecko (2004, pp. 267–268) contended that making the learning individuals the "owners" of the learning process would boost their motivation, independence, and readiness to accept responsibility for the learning outcomes, as well as make the learning process as a whole much more systematic and effective. Brecko (2004) identified the main advantages of the

learning contract as follows: making learning interesting, valuable, and relevant to the learner; increasing learners' motivation; providing freedom to choose learning areas; allowing learners to progress at their own pace; offering a clear focus for the learning process; acknowledging individual differences; and building learners' confidence and enthusiasm for learning. Moreover, Sajadi, Fayazi, Fournier, and Abedi (2017) conducted a study on the use of learning contracts and found that this method, when implemented among nursing students, enhances self-directed learning among the students. According to research on contract learning, learning contracts (LCs) help students become self-directed learners (Abdullah & Yih, 2014; McNamara, 2019; Lamiri et al., 2022).

Table 1 Class Observation and Agenda of SPD Class

Meeting	Schedule	Meeting	Schedule
1	Registration Day	9	Regular Day
2	Artwork 1	10	Regular Day
3	Artwork 2	11	Yel-yel Performances
4	Summary	12	Group Artwork
5	Guest Star Day	13	Regular Day
6	Mid Term Day	14	Last Day
7	Regular Day	15	Final Exam
8	Regular Day		

The SPD class consistently began at 6:00 AM, requiring students to be present and prepared by 5:30 AM. The session typically ended at 10:00 AM, although it occasionally extended beyond that time. Prior to the first meeting, students were instructed to form groups of six to eight members, which would serve as their working teams throughout the entire SPD program. Each group was required to choose a name that represented the principles and values they aimed to uphold. In addition, every group appointed a leader, referred to as the Group Leader (GL) or manager, who was responsible for coordinating and guiding the group's activities. The effort to create a collaborative atmosphere clearly reflects an attempt to cultivate teamwork and leadership skills. Participant A stated that the formation and organization of groups helped enhance students' teaming ability. This finding aligns with research suggesting that structured group formation and the assignment of leadership roles facilitate the development of teamwork and leadership competencies. Clearly defined team structures, such as role distribution, decision-making hierarchy, and shared responsibilities, promote coordination and cooperation among members, providing opportunities to practice leadership behaviors in authentic contexts. Ji & Yan (2020) emphasize that well-defined team structures enhance coordination and performance, particularly when team longevity allows members to explore and refine leadership roles. Similarly, De Prada, Mareque, & Pino-Juste (2022) note that cooperative learning and role-based group work strengthen students' collaborative, organizational, and initiative-taking abilities, which are central to teamwork and leadership development. In the same vein, van der Haar, Koeslag-Kreunen, Euwe, & Segers (2017) highlight that structured leadership within teams supports both team effectiveness and collective learning by clarifying expectations and modeling effective interpersonal dynamics.

Each group should have their own name and principals. It is important to note that each small group must choose a group name that carries a specific meaning, representing the team's spirit, values, and guiding principles. The use of meaningful group names or mottos helps establish a share identity and strengthens cohesion among members. Such as symbolic representations of team values encourage cooperation, collective motivation and a sense of belonging, all of which enhance teamwork and leadership development. Fransen, et al. (2020) emphasize that shared identity and common symbols such as team names, mottos, or values can significantly increase members' psychological connection to their group and stimulate cooperative behaviors. Similarly, Stevens, et al. (2019) found that when leaders and members co-create shared team values, it enhances collective commitment, effort, and performance. In educational contexts, De Prada et al. (2022) also highlight that structured identity-building within teams fosters collaboration, coordination, and leadership practice among students.

In the SPD course, there were role-plays in SPD class that were made as if in a professional office as an organizational structure is established to resemble a company: the lecturers act as the Presidents, while the leaders of each group act as the head of managers. There were also general managers as the class leaders that were offered voluntarily. The lecturers asked the students who wanted to be the leader in class as General Manager. Giving students room for voluntary action appears to foster leadership development by providing real opportunities for initiative, responsibility, and decision-making in low-risk, practice-oriented contexts. Voluntary roles let students take charge of projects, coordinate others, and solve emergent problems. Systematic reviews and empirical students show that skills-based volunteering and service activities reliably produce gains in interpersonal and leadership competencies, because they combine meaningful tasks with opportunities for reflection, feedback, and role-taking (Dempsey-Brench & Shantz, 2022). Additionally, research on volunteer organizations highlights the central role of leader behavior in shaping volunteers' motivation and the development of leadership capacity; well-designed volunteer experiences therefore both provide practice opportunities and model leader behaviors that trainees can adopt (Tsai, Newstead, Lewis, & Chuah, 2024). The General Manager (GM) is appointed to manage schedules (such as performances) and oversee the implementation of exhibitions when they are held. The GM is also responsible for collecting reflection papers and both individual and group assignments from each team to be submitted to the Presidents. Experiential learning offers a practical pathway for developing interpersonal competencies because it combines authentic, task-based engagement with reflection and iterative practice. By moving learners through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, experiential approaches provide repeated opportunities to practice communication, teamwork, role-taking, and conflict management in realistic contexts and processes that reliably promote interpersonal skill acquisition (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). Recent systematic reviews and theoretical updates reinforce that modern experiential and service-learning programs are particularly effective at fostering soft skills such as teamwork, leadership, and communication because they embed meaningful responsibilities, feedback, and social interaction into the learning cycle (Morris, 2020; Culcasi & Venegas, 2023). Empirical studies further show that team-based experiential tasks and well-structured role assignments increase coordination, collaborative problem solving, and opportunities to practice leadership behaviors, which together translate into measurable gains in teaming and interpersonal competence (De Prada, Mareque, & Pino-Juste, 2022).

Additionally in the SPD course, students were expected to behave as professional managers and adhere to a formal dress code. This policy was explained clearly on the first registration day. The SPD program emphasized a high level of discipline regarding students' appearance and professional conduct. All students were required to wear formal office attire:

female students wore skirts, blouses or shirts, blazers, and flat shoes, while male students wore dress shirts, trousers, and loafers. Each student also wore an office-style nametag displaying their name and group affiliation. Every morning before class, the General Managers and lecturers inspected students' attire to ensure compliance with the dress code and to reinforce the value of professionalism.

High discipline in the SPD course was also fostered through punctuality and strict rules, where any violation could result in immediate course dismissal (receiving an "E" and repeating the class in the following semester). The rules in class were established through agreements among general managers and managers, allowing students to participate in the decision-making process. Lecturers granted students authority to engage in rule formation and provided them with a learning contract at the beginning of the course. This practice reflects the application of student learning contract as a tool for promoting self-directed learning, accountability, and shared responsibility in academic and behavioral performance. According to Johnson (1987), learning contracts enhance self-awareness and interpersonal responsibility by encouraging learners to articulate, commit to, and evaluate their goals collaboratively. Such collaborative evaluation practices align with experiential learning principles, where reflection and participation in assessment foster not only cognitive but also interpersonal growth.

One of the course rules penalized students who were observed sleeping in class; according to course practice, even yawning that was noticed by the President could result in a sanction such as push-ups. In addition, students who arrived late (after 06:00) or after the lecturer had already entered the room were automatically required to repeat the course; students were also prohibited from using the stairs because classes were held on the fourth floor. SPD intentionally applied strict regulations to train students' mental toughness and resilience. Deliberately confronting students with challenging, sometimes uncomfortable conditions can function as a form of productive struggle that promotes persistence, self-regulation, and professional attitudes. Educational research suggests that well-designed challenge-based or experiential activities that introduce manageable discomfort help learners develop adaptive coping strategies, leadership initiative, and professional resilience when accompanied by reflection and supported guidance (DiNapoli, 2023; Taconis & Bekker, 2023). More broadly, resilience-focused approaches in higher education argue that embedding difficult but scaffolded experiences into curricula can prepare students for workplace demands and enhance their capacity to recover from setbacks which is an outcome that aligns with SPD's goal of fostering professional readiness through disciplined practice (Price, 2022).

The presence of defined organizational roles within the SPD class appeared to play a central part in promoting students' professional development. By assigning clear responsibilities and role identities, the classroom structure provided repeated, authentic opportunities for students to practice leadership, coordination, and decision-making in socially meaningful contexts. Role-taking encourages students to enact professional behaviors, negotiate authority and experience accountability, which in turn fosters teamwork, self-efficacy, and an understanding of organizational dynamics which are key elements of early professional socialization (Johnson, 1987). Moreover, when role assignments are embedded within an experiential learning cycle, students are able to reflect on performance, integrate conceptual learning with practice, and iteratively improve interpersonal and managerial skills (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). As previously stated, the students were also divided into a number of cooperative groups in order to accomplish specific objectives and complete assignments or challenges from the lecturers. Because every team aimed to be the best, this led to a very competitive tournament atmosphere in the classroom. The team leader for each group was a Group Leader (LD). As a result, both at the classical level and in teams, the pupils were given a highly structured organization.

From the aspects mentioned above, several points appear to resemble Johnson's (1987) framework, which outlines five key components that contribute to the development of interpersonal skills. These include the use of a student learning contract, which promotes self-direction and accountability; cooperative learning, which fosters teamwork and mutual understanding; experiential role assignments, which allow learners to practice leadership and decision-making in authentic contexts; feedback and evaluation mechanisms, which encourage reflection and self-awareness; and reflective practice, which integrates learning from experience into behavioral improvement. In the SPD class, these components were clearly visible through its structured and disciplined design, where students engaged in professional roles, developed team-based accountability, and participated actively in evaluation and reflection. Such practices align with the principles proposed by Robbins and Hunsaker (2014), who highlight that training programs addressing communication, supervision, and self-awareness can significantly enhance interpersonal and managerial performance. Likewise, Janasz et al. (2015) emphasize that deliberate experiential learning combined with structured feedback cultivates professional maturity and interpersonal competence.

3.2 Course Structure and Weekly Agenda

The SPD course followed a structured progression from orientation to final implementation. As presented in Table 1 and supported by the interview findings with the lecturers and students, the following summary describes the focus of each stage: (1) week 1as registration day: group formation, orientation, course introduction, and learning contract discussion, organizational structures deal; (2) week 2-3: individual artwork exhibitions; (3) week 4: summary with community building sessions by the lecturers; (4) week 5: workshop and seminar with certain guest star; (5) week 6: midterm day in form of reflections and project proposal seminar; (6) week 7-10: regular day with individual reflection; (7) week 11: yel-yel group performances; (8) week 12: group artwork exhibition; (9) week 13-14: regular day with individual reflection; (10) week 15: final exam with project presentation.

Motivational videos and music can play a constructive role in professional development by increasing emotional engagement, modelling professional behavior, and creating memorable prompts for reflection and identity formation. Educational videos that are well designed to provoke interest and reflection improve motivation and facilitate the integration of knowledge with practice, while immersive and socially relevant media reduce anxiety and foster classroom engagement that supports experiential learning cycles (Brame, 2017; Rosendahl, 2023). Likewise, the deliberate use of songs including national or identity-focused songs can strengthen group cohesion, cultural and civic identity, and collective motivation, which turn supports professional attitudes and a sense of shared purpose among learners (Ishii, 2018).

The lecturers primarily used personal or other people's experiences to tell inspirational narratives. In front of the class, the lecturers allowed the students to express their thoughts, feelings, ideas, and opinions, particularly those pertaining to their reflections. The professors occasionally allowed the students to share with one another in groups during certain tasks. It appeared from the earlier explanation of the SPD class's intricate procedure that the class offered a setting for students to engage in interactive discussion with one another as well as with the instructors. Sharing opportunities support the development of communicative competence because dialogic classroom practices and peer-to-peer exchange create meaningful occasions for students to articulate ideas, receive formative feedback, and rehearse interpersonal behaviors in low-risk settings (García-Carrión, Aguileta, Padrós, & Ramis-Salas, 2020). Moreover, structured peer feedback and reflective activities not only improve language and speaking skills but also foster reflective communication, confidence, and professional dispositions that transfer to workplace interactions (Janesarvatan & Asoodar, 2024; Karnieli-Miller, 2020).

In the SPD class, the lecturers assigned a series of special challenges and reflective tasks. These included writing summaries of selected books (such as The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People), completing a stop-smoking challenge, composing a four-page reflection on "Change in Me" and "What I've Learned in SPD," creating lists of "A Hundred Good Things in Me" and "A Hundred Bad Things in Me," documenting "Good Deeds in a Week," and recording a "Time Table Every 30 Minutes in a Week." Students were also required to produce individual artworks, collaborate on group artwork, participate in a group artwork presentation, request eulogies from people around them, perform a group chant, and complete a final project. Collectively, these activities contributed to the development of various interpersonal skills among the students throughout the course.

3.3 Assessment and Evaluation System in Highlighted Activities

Assessment in the SPD course emphasized both individual and group accountability. Students' performance was evaluated based on participation, creativity, teamwork, and project outcomes. However, there are several highlighted activities in SPD Course, where peer assessment and self-evaluation were the integral parts of the grading process, promoting honesty and reflective learning.

3.3.1 Writing four-page-reflection about "Change in Me"

For their midterm evaluation, the students were required to submit a four-page reflection on "Change in Me" after enrolling in SPD classes. The reflection must be handwritten, have no more than three mistakes, be free of correction tape and folded paper, and adhere to the guidelines that the general manager shared the day before. According to Robbins and Hunsaker (2014), this assignment belongs into three of eight categories for learning about self-awareness. These categories include experiences with goal achievement, writing self-written interviews, autobiographical and life stories, and finding solitude to reflect on experiences and draw lessons from them. This assignment was assessed by peer review, as it comes not only from the lecturer but also from fellow students, through the role of the General Manager (GM). Furthermore, the reflections written by students also served as self-assessments, which were included into reflective learning.

In this context, the General Manager's role as the initial evaluator exemplifies distributed leadership (Spillane, 2005), where responsibility for learning and evaluation rests not only with the lecturer but also with students to foster a sense of ownership and accountability. This kind of peer-assessment also can stimulate students to reflect, discuss and collaborate" (Strijbos & Sluijsmans 2010, as cited in Karami & Rezaei, 2015). Furthermore, the reflections written by students also served as self-assessments, which were included into reflective learning which is in line with (Schön, 2017) idea of reflection-on-action, namely the individual's ability to analyze experiences after the event has occurred as a means of professional development.

By increasing students' awareness of their thoughts, feelings, and behaviors while writing, the stringent reflection guidelines —such as the requirement to write by hand, the limitation on allowable errors, and the prohibition of correction tape— are intended to foster mindful reflective practice. Writing by hand naturally slows down cognitive processes, increasing focus and processing depth. According to empirical research, taking notes by hand encourages greater cognitive engagement since longhand note-takers select information more carefully and employ more generative processing than laptop users (Mueller & Oppenheimer, 2014).

Students are further forced by the restrictions on errors and corrections to carefully organize their thoughts, foresee errors, and control their writing process—behaviors that support the growth of self-regulation. According to Zimmerman (2010), self-regulated learners use task-related methods, create personal goals, and keep an eye on their strengths and weaknesses while regularly assessing their performance. As a result, these strict guidelines encourage disciplined and deliberate reflective writing by supporting the development of

executive functioning abilities including planning, monitoring, and attention management. In addition, the stringent guidelines—such as the need for handwritten work on lined folio paper, the use of just a pen, the ban on correction tape, and the cap on the number of permitted errors—promote what educational psychologists refer to as cognitive discipline and metacognitive regulation. Similarly, the high level of constraint in the task reflects principles of deliberate practice (Ericsson & Harwell, 2019) where improvement emerges from sustained attention to detail, error sensitivity, and repeated engagement under demanding conditions. By removing the possibility of effortless error-correction (e.g., correction tape), students are encouraged to anticipate mistakes before they occur, heightening their cognitive engagement and promoting attentional discipline.

3.3.2 Writing four-page-reflection about "What I've Learnt in SPD"

In order to complete the "What I've Learned in SPD" assignment, which was given during the seventh meeting of the Service Program Design course, students had to come up with at least 150 statements that summarized the knowledge, skills, and personal growth they had acquired. Despite its apparent simplicity, this assignment serves as a deep reflective exercise that incorporates several theoretical underpinnings of reflective learning and self-awareness. According to Robbins and Hunsaker (2006), self-awareness can be developed by writing autobiographical narratives, conducting self-interviews, and processing experiences alone—three strategies that are intrinsic to this task. Students indirectly conduct a self-interview that stimulates introspection and self-evaluation by articulating lengthy lists of learing points. At the same time, the collected statements create an autobiographical trace of their involvement in the SPD course, written in a quiet reflective space that promotes cognitive and emotional processing. Additionally, the exercise is consistent with Schön's (1983) concept of reflection-on-action, in which students turn classroom events into meaning-making processes that support their professional development by revisiting and reinterpreting their previous learning experiences after they have occurred. According to this perspective, the "What I've Learned in SPD" assignment fosters self-efficacy, interpersonal awareness, and professional identity—all important goals for students involved in service-oriented program design—in addition to acting as a vehicle for consolidating academic learning.

3.3.3 Asking Eulogy

During the 14th SPD meeting, the lecturers urged the students to get eulogies from friends, family, and coworkers in their communities or places of employment. The students might either print the assignment or write it by hand. The instructors then requested the students to report their experiences asking friends, family, and coworkers for eulogy at the next meeting. According to Robbins and Hunsaker (2014), this task was one of the methods for gaining self-awareness through understanding one's own life story or autobiographical narrative, albeit from the perspectives of others.

The activity of asking students to collect eulogies from people close to them aligns closely with several foundational theories of self-awareness and identity formation. First, it reflects the Johari Window framework introduced by Luft and Ingham (1955), particularly the blind self-area—attributes of the self that are unknown to the individual but known by others. Students have direct access to these external opinions on their character, values, and interpersonal contributions when they get eulogies from friends, family, and coworkers. This process expands the open self, enabling a more comprehensive, accurate, and authentic understanding of the self.

This activity is also deeply connected to the theory of reflected appraisal, originating from Cooley's (1902) "looking-glass self" and elaborated by Mead (1934). The theory posits that individuals form their self-concept based on how they imagine others see and evaluate them. In this sense, as summarized by Chandge (2018), eulogies function as a social mirror: students are exposed to others' evaluations, which help build their self-awareness, reinforce positive self-

concept, and clarify their interpersonal impact. Unlike daily interactions that often leave room for ambiguity, eulogies provide explicit, emotionally grounded appraisals that strengthen this reflective process.

Moreover, the assignment goes beyond mere reflected appraisals. Students receive actual appraisals—direct assessments from significant others. Research by Yue, Long, Yang, Xiao, & Pan (2021) demonstrates that actual peer appraisals shape individuals' self-concepts through reflected appraisals, highlighting the importance of peers in the identity development of late adolescents. Their findings also reveal cultural nuances such as self-modesty in collectivist contexts, underscoring how receiving sincere recognition from close others can meaningfully influence self-concept formation.

In a nutshell, the eulogy assignment functions as a powerful self-awareness intervention. It bridges blind and open areas of the self (Johari Window), activates the social-mirroring mechanism inherent in reflected appraisal (Cooley; Mead), and integrates real interpersonal feedback that shapes identity development (Yue et al., 2021). Through this synthesis of theoretical perspectives, the task meaningfully supports students' growth in self-knowledge, self-esteem, and relational understanding.

3.3.4 Writing "A Week Time Table Every 30 Minutes"

In this assignment, the lecturers asked the students to write their activities every 30 minutes in a week. Each exercise should have a reflecting note written by the students. The assignment must be written by hand, adhere to the guidelines established by the general manager, and contain no more than three errors or corrective tape. By keeping daily or weekly records on every decision taken and the amount of time spent on those tasks (daily agenda or planning), this assignment demonstrated increasing self-awareness.

The idea of self-monitoring, which Bandura (1986) states is a crucial component of self-regulation, is also consistent with this practice of documenting actions every 30 minutes for a week. Students learn to recognize patterns of behavior, routines, and their reactions to different activities through the process of monitoring, reviewing, and reflecting back on how they utilize their time. Self-monitoring promotes ongoing self-improvement by assisting people in recognizing the discrepancy between their desired and actual behaviors.

Additionally, the time management training approach put forward by Macan (1994) is reflected in this practice of thorough recordkeeping. He clarified that using time logs has been demonstrated to raise productivity levels, awareness of time loss, and priority decision-making. According to Wolters & Brady (2020), time management is a crucial self-regulatory process that allows students to actively control when and how long they participate in the activities they believe are essential to achieving their academic objectives. Students acquire more effective self-management abilities by becoming more conscious of how they devote their energy and concentrate by noting activities every 30 minutes.

3.3.5 Writing "A Hundred Good Things in Me" and "A Hundred Bad Things in Me"

Similar to the previous writing assignment, the lecturers required the students to write "A Hundred Good Things in Me" and "A Hundred Bad Things in Me" by hand (no computer). Letter paper with a specific format, alignment, and line should be used for writing. The paper cannot contain more than three typos or errors. Correction tape was not permitted. Letter papers should be used to write the list. Asserting and liabilities balance sheets of strengths and weaknesses could help people become more self-aware (Robbins and Hunsaker, 2006). Through the lens of strengths-and-weaknesses analysis, which is linked in the literature to self-discovery and personal assessment, the accomplishment of writing "A Hundred Good Things in Me" and "A Hundred Bad Things in Me" can be comprehended. Seligman (2002, as cited in Buzguța, 2024) asserts that recognizing one's strengths and shortcomings serves as a fundamental basis for character development since it allows people to see their highest potential

while also recognizing areas that require improvement. Not like the usual SWOT analysis, Seligman (2002), a founder of positive psychology, focuses on identifying and utilizing character strengths to overcome weaknesses and improve well-being. Students are forced to engage in in-depth thought that goes beyond superficial or automated responses by making the commitment to hand construct lengthy lists—one hundred items each—which promotes more genuine self-awareness and personal insight.

3.3.6 Writing "A Week Good Deeds"

A minimum of 150 handwritten submissions of "Good Deeds in a Week" were required of the students. This work served as an exercise in recognizing and prioritizing relevant personal values, specifically the behaviors people emphasize in their daily lives, rather than just recording their actions. Robbins and Hunsaker (2014) assert that organizing and defining one's work values improves self-awareness by assisting people in identifying the things they regularly decide to devote time and energy to. Students were encouraged to look for patterns in their behavior, become more aware of their prosocial inclinations, and gain a better grasp of the values that influence their daily decision-making through this lengthy reflective exercise.

Within Kolb's (1984) experiential learning framework, this assignment functions as a form of reflective observation, in which learners revisit and analyze their lived experiences over the week and begin to conceptualize the meaning of their actions. This process enables students to see how their actual behaviors reflect personal values and contribute to character development—an essential step in shaping one's self-identity.

Furthermore, the requirement to list 150 good deeds aligns with gratitude journaling practices in developmental psychology. Emmons & McCullough (2003) demonstrated that structured gratitude writing increases self-awareness, empathy, emotional stability, and overall well-being. By documenting the good actions that they have performed, students reinforce their ability to recognize positive experiences, validate prosocial behavior, and cultivate a sustained reflective attitude.

3.3.7 Making Individual Artworks

On the second day and third day of SPD, the students were asked to make individual artworks. Students were required to create their own artwork on the second and third days of SPD. On the second day, each student was instructed to create a piece of art based on a life principle. The lecturers were referring to any type of artwork that embodied the students' motto. On the third day, however, the instructors urged the students to create artwork based on their reflections of "good things and bad things in me." The instructors granted the students the power to choose how the artworks would be evaluated and graded.

For this assignment, the lecturers required the students to organize an art exhibition, in which all artworks were displayed alongside their titles and participant numbers—without names. Each student received a voting sheet to select "the best artwork" and "the worst artwork." The student whose work received the title best artwork earned certain privileges as determined by the lecturers. In contrast, any student who received the title worst artwork three times (across three projects during SPD) was required to retake SPD in the following semester. This mechanism illustrates the creation of a structured competitive environment, in which ranking and consequences are intentionally embedded to motivate students to produce their best work. Such an approach aligns with Johnson's (1987) concept of an appropriate competitive climate—one that is governed by clear rules, specific goals, and an emphasis on performance achievement.

According to Pollock, D'Adderio, & Kornberger (2020), rankings can shape competitive rivalries differently, including creating more episodic forms of rivalry. Humans naturally compare themselves to others, so when institutions provide rankings, leaderboards, or comparisons between students, it can motivate them to improve their performance, leading to

healthy or unhealthy competition (Festinger, 1954). This healthy competition can be focused on positive outcomes: the motivation to outperform others despite the risk of creating performance comparisons, not mastery (Nicholls, 1984 & Dweck, 1986 as cited in Wentzel & Miele, 2016). Associated with Skinner's Operant Conditioning theory, ranking systems, as well as the Best and Worst system, are forms of positive reinforcement (benefits for high rankings) and negative reinforcement (consequences for low rankings). According to Eber et al. (2021), Wang et al. (2018), and Ma & Chen (2024), those who have a strong competitive mindset typically put in more effort and perform better. Self-efficacy and task motivation are mediated by competitive attitudes in vocational high school pupils. According to Spurk et al. (2018) and Ye et al. (2020), the competitive environment also influences behavior and thought processes, which frequently contribute to success. One method to increase self-awareness was through creating artwork, which appeared to depict students' lifestyles in visual forms (Robbins and Hunsaker, 2006). Johnson (1989) asserts that allowing students to choose how they are evaluated and graded could enhance their interpersonal skills.

3.3.8 Making Group Artwork

Aside from the yel-yel performance, one major task that the students should do was creating group artwork. The vision, mission, and objectives of every group should be reflected in the artwork they create. Each member of the group should equitably contribute to this project, and the students should complete it on their own. For this assignment, there were no set guidelines; instead, the lecturers encouraged students to be creative and innovative.

Creating artwork allowed students to represent their lifestyles in pictorial forms, which served as a medium for enhancing self-awareness (Robbins & Hunsaker, 2014). Producing group artwork also fostered highly effective team interactions that could develop students' communication, motivation, leadership, and teamwork skills. Working collaboratively required students to confront various challenges, thereby strengthening their problem-solving abilities. The group artwork project clearly provided students with direct opportunities to work collaboratively (experiential learning), experience real team dynamics while completing a project, and address emerging issues in order to reach a collective solution. A variety of interpersonal skills are directly improved when students are given structured opportunities to interact and learn in teams, according to research based on Social Interdependence Theory (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). When students work together to achieve common objectives, they must negotiate duties, communicate clearly, settle disputes, and support one another—all of which lead to deeper interpersonal competency than just cooperation.

According to recent studies (e.g., Laal & Laal, 2020; Lee & Kim, 2021 as mentioned in Ma & Chen (2024)), group work environments also improve students' social communication, emotional intelligence, and negotiating skills since the team becomes a natural micro-laboratory of human interaction. When combined, these ideas support the idea that team learning actively develops the wider range of interpersonal skills necessary for career advancement rather than just enhancing cooperation. Unlike individual artwork, group artwork was not only displayed in the art exhibition, but was also accompanied by a group presentation. This presentation was followed by a bidding session in which other groups could "purchase" the artwork at increasing prices, as will be explained in the following section.

3.3.9 Group Artwork Presentation

The students' artworks were showcased in the hallway, arranged in a way that resembled a professional art gallery. Unlike the previous session, the works were not evaluated through individual voting. Instead, each group presented and promoted their creation before entering an auction, during which other groups could bid on the pieces. The artwork considered the most outstanding was the one that earned the highest bid. Through this process, students engaged in

negotiation and collaborative decision-making, discussing and determining the value of a product collectively.

Following the auction, a conflict arose when several students perceived the system as unfair, noting that some groups had formed alliances to purchase one another's work. In response, the GM facilitated a structured discussion, serving as a neutral mediator. During this dialogue, nearly all students voiced their thoughts, feelings, concerns, and objections, while also offering constructive feedback to their peers. This moment provided meaningful opportunities for students to practice problem-solving, negotiation, and bargaining, while also building confidence in expressing disagreement—skills that directly strengthened their communication competence.

Drawing on Johnson's (1989) work, empowering students to participate in determining evaluation and grading processes contributes significantly to the development of interpersonal skills. Aligned with this perspective, the auction created an authentic learning space where students could enhance their communication, negotiation, and bargaining abilities through direct experiential engagement. In activities involving auctions or bidding, students learn to identify key issues (including value, limitations, and risks), convey their ideas to reach agreements (through negotiation, offering proposals, and exchanging information), and collaboratively work toward mutually accepted solutions. Such conditions simultaneously foster improved communication skills and more refined problem-solving abilities.

3.3.10 Yel-Yel Performance

All groups participated in a yel-yel performance, which could manifest in various creative forms such as songs, choreographed dances, rhythmic or percussive arrangements, cheerleading movements, musical compositions, or any other expressive performance that represented the group's common values, vision, mission, and collective objectives within SPD as determined at the beginning of the program. The students were provided with a four-week preparation period, during which they conceptualized, rehearsed, and refined their performances. On the day of the event, an MC guided the flow of the program and conducted a lottery to determine the sequence of performances. Each group was allocated a 15-minute slot to showcase their work to the audience. The evaluation and grading were conducted by both the students and the lecturers, based on a scoring rubric that had been distributed by the GM. The final grades were determined by summing all points in the evaluation rubric, which resulted in identifying the five groups categorized as The Best and the five groups categorized as The Worst. The groups classified as The Best received an A, while those classified as The Worst received a C.

Working in a team enabled the students to enhance their communication skills, motivation skills, teamwork skills, and problem-solving skills. Collaborative work also fostered highly effective interactions among the students.

3.3.11 Final Project

Although the formal meetings of SPD had already ended, the course still required one final project that served as the culmination of the entire learning process. In this project, each group was responsible for designing a service program and then "selling" it to a professional institution. This meant that the students not only had to create the program but also secure a real client who agreed to purchase it. Once a potential client was found, the group needed to deliver a persuasive presentation to promote their program and engage in negotiations until both parties reached a mutual agreement.

Before the program could be implemented, the group had to present their design and their needs analysis of the target client to two ELESP USD lecturers who were not involved in SPD. After receiving approval, the students were expected to run the program according to the agreed plan. Their payment depended on the negotiation outcomes with the client. At the end of the

process, each group was required to produce a comprehensive final report documenting every stage—from initial planning to final implementation.

This final project, much like the previous team-based assignments, provided extensive opportunities for students to strengthen essential interpersonal skills. Working collaboratively compelled them to communicate effectively, motivate one another, solve emerging problems, and engage in authentic teamwork. In addition, because they interacted directly with professionals in real workplace settings, the students had the chance to develop and refine their communication skills at a more advanced, professional level. Through this project, the students were able to experience what it feels like to teach directly in real professional settings and to get a brief taste of the systems, work dynamics, pressures, and expectations that exist in the actual workplace. This concrete experience serves as the foundation of experiential learning, because it allows students to become part of a real "community of practice" in which they learn directly by observing and interacting with professionals. Through active participation in authentic workplace activities, students do not only gain technical knowledge but also absorb the norms, communication styles, and problem-solving strategies used by practitioners in the field.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The SPD course implementation reflects a well-structured model of experiential, service-based learning within a teacher education context. Through its combination of weekly structured activities, reflective tasks, and real-world simulations, the course offers students multiple opportunities to engage in authentic and meaningful learning experiences. Although this study focuses only on describing the structure and processes of the course, it provides a solid foundation for future research examining its influence on students' professional growth and interpersonal skill development.

From the overall observations, the researcher identified six major processes that shaped the SPD course: the establishment of students' learning contracts, the organization of cooperative group structures, the creation of a competitive tournament-like environment, the implementation of student-led evaluation and grading, and the series of assignments and challenges given throughout the semester. These six processes were implemented through eleven major projects and tasks, each designed to cultivate key interpersonal competencies—namely self-awareness, communication, motivation, leadership, problem-solving, and teamwork—as integral components of the students' experiential learning journey.

5. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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