SERVICE-LEARNING ACTIVITIES OF PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS: PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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Abstract: This study explored community members' perceptions of service-learning (SL) activities of pre-service primary school teachers (PSTs) of a university in Vietnam. More specifically, the study aimed at investigating how community members (CMs) perceive the impacts of SL activities organized at primary school settings on primary school students and the professional development of PSTs. To collect data for the study, multiple interviews were conducted with primary school leaders (Ls) and primary school teachers (Ts) at three primary schools (PSs), who were directly involved in the SL activities of the PSTs. The findings revealed SL activities were believed to positively impact PSTs' professional development through providing opportunities for context-based learning, and pedagogical knowledge and skill development. CM also believed that SL activities improved primary students' engagement, motivation, and confidence in English learning. The paper provides implications for teacher educators and school managers.

Keywords: service-learning activities, community members, perceptions, pre-service primary school teachers, Vietnam

1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in service learning (SL) as an educational strategy across various academic disciplines (Geller et al. 2016). SL, rooted in the concept of experiential learning introduced by Dewey (1938), offers learners the opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in practical settings. In an age of globalization, tertiary education's role in shaping a quality workforce has amplified the importance of SL in higher educational institutions (Marginson & Wende, 2006).

SL is believed to have immense potential for enhancing student learning and personal development, fostering critical thinking skills, and nurturing an appreciation for human diversity (Barnes & Caprino, 2016; Glazier et al., 2014). Within the field of teacher education, research has shown SL plays a vital role in equipping pre-service teachers (PSTs) with practical skills to enrich their teaching practices (Smolen et al., 2013), significantly impacting their professional development (Burgess et al., 2010). SL is, therefore, considered as a bridge between universities and communities, as it enhances the effectiveness of teacher training and contributes to community development (Gelmon et al., 2001).

While studies have highlighted the benefits of SL for students (Mark, 1993; Gray, 2000), most studies have focused on students' perspectives, often overlooking the viewpoint of community members (CMs) who actively involved in SL projects (Blouin & Perry, 2009; Mogford & Lyons, 2019). In the Vietnamese context, little research has focused on CMs'

perceptions of SL. This dearth of community perspectives can result in limited objectivity when assessing the effectiveness of SL activities. Understanding CMs' perceptions is crucial for designing and implementing meaningful SL initiatives that benefit both PSTs and the communities they serve. The present study responds to this urgent need by investigating CM's perceptions of impacts of SL activities organized at Vietnamese primary school settings by PSTs of a teacher training program in Central Vietnam on primary school students (Ss) and on pre-service primary school teachers' (PST) professional development. This study, therefore, is conducted to address the following research questions:

1. From community members' perspective, what are the impacts of SL activities on primary school students?

2. From community members' perspective, what are the impacts of SL activities on pre-service primary school teachers' professional development?

2. Literature review

2.1 Service learning

Service learning (SL) is an educational strategy rooted in the principle of "reciprocal learning," as described by Robert Sigmon (1979). This approach emphasizes that both those who serve and those who receive service should benefit from the experience, as learning emerges from service activities. Crucially, SL occurs when both service providers and recipients gain knowledge through the experience. This reciprocal learning aspect is at the core of SL, as highlighted by Jacoby (1996) and Pompa (2002).

However, the term "service learning" has been applied to a wide range of experiential education activities. John Dewey (1938) initially introduced the concept of "experiential learning". It is, as defined by Gentry (1990), considered as a "participative, interactive, and applied approach", enabling interaction with the environment in highly variable and uncertain situations, and encompassing learning on affective, behavioral, and cognitive dimensions. Importantly, it necessitates a structured experience with defined learning goals, ongoing supervision, assessment based on theory, and continuous process feedback.

This research study is developed in the light of Sigmon's (1979) definition of SL as reciprocal learning, emphasizing that both PSTs and Ss benefit from the experience. Furthermore, SL activities are integrated into academic curricula to address genuine community needs, offering students opportunities for experiential learning with structured experiences, defined learning goals, ongoing supervision, assessment based on theory, and continuous process feedback (Gentry, 1990).

2.2 Service learning in teacher education

SL has emerged as a dynamic educational approach that transcends the boundaries of traditional education, connecting classroom learning with real-world application. This paradigm shift emphasizes experiential learning, fostering a deeper understanding of subject matter by immersing learners in practical contexts (Dewey, 1938; Kesten, 2012; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Particularly relevant to the field of teacher education, SL has gained recognition for its potential

to shape PSTs into well-rounded professionals equipped with not only theoretical knowledge but also hands-on skills and community awareness (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

At the core of SL lies the concept of reciprocal learning, where PSTs' education is intertwined with community needs. This approach transcends the notion of education as a unidirectional transfer of knowledge, instead positioning it as a collaborative endeavor (Gelmon, 2001). In essence, SL goes beyond conventional classroom by integrating community engagement into the learning process. This integration nurtures a symbiotic relationship where PSTs engage in meaningful activities that benefit both their learning journey and the community they serve (Kesten, 2012; Williams, 2009).

SL additionally demonstrates to be in line with a recent shift in the theory and practice of second/foreign language teacher education (Johnson, 2006). In this shift, learning to teach is described as a long-term complex development process that stems from participation in social practices and settings associated with learning, emphasizing how teacher education has changed from cognitive to social processes. In the field of L2 learning, SL has gained growing attention from administrators and language educators because it offers language teachers and learners a chance of contextualizing the target language and facilitating authentic language use (Guariento & Morley, 2001).

2.3 Community involvement in service learning

Collaborative relationships between institutions are vital for successful SL projects, for collaborative partnerships ensure that SL activities are contextually relevant, impactful, and sustainable (Sandy & Holland, 2006). Moreover, shared learning experiences are central to community-university partnerships, in which enriching CMs, university educators, and students engage in a process of collective knowledge-building that enriches the educational experience for all involved parties (Lave & Wenger, 1991). In particular, university-community collaborations are now understood to be connected to SL initiatives for delivering the SL experience to university students and assessing its effectiveness (Bailis, 2002; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Gelmon et al., 1998). Therefore, it is challenging to envision how SL could possibly exist in the absence of community involvement. More importantly, as CMs are also required to devote a considerable amount of time to community engagement and SL projects that involve the planning, implementation and evaluation of projects (Conville & Kinnell, 2010; Schwartz & Fontenot, 2007), it is crucially imperative for their perceptions to be heard in order to assess the effectiveness of SL projects more objectively.

2.4 Related Studies

Exploration of CMs' perceptions of SL has garnered attention in various international contexts (Gerstenblatt, 2014; Jodaan & Mennega, 2022; Petri, 2015; Rinaldo etal., 2015; Sandy & Holland, 2006), offering insightful glimpses into the dynamics of community engagement. In a qualitative study with 99 experienced community partners across various California communities, Sandy and Holland (2006) reported that community partners emphasized the importance of valuing and nurturing campus-community partnership relationships, their dedication to educating college students, and the transformative potential of campus-community partnerships.

In a different setting of Portland, a study conducted by Gerstenblatt (2014) explored the lived experience of nine CMs of various positions of different organizations working with university SL classes. The findings from questionnaires and interviews highlighted the benefits of SL for both college students and community partners, and the importance of the university's recognition and support of SL.

In another study with 24 community partners in America, who were interviewed to evaluate how reciprocity works in higher education SL, Petri (2015) reported that relationships with university students encouraged CMs to engage in community projects, inspired CMs to try new things and be more proactive, promoted community learning, and left a long-lasting impact on students in the community. In a similar context, Rinaldo and colleagues conducted a study of nine key community partners from different organizations through interviews to examine the value of SL projects to community partners. They found that community partners valued consistent faculty involvement and early engagement through orientations for effective and valuable experiences. Community partners noted direct benefits, such as volunteer support and expertise, and highlighted the impact on achieving organizational missions and students' learning and development, while also acknowledging challenges related to student'' time management and planning.

In South Africa, an investigation into the self-perceived role of 36 community partners in a community engagement module was conducted Jodaan and Mennega (2022) using both questionnaires and interviews. It emphasized the development of work-related skills in university students through community projects. The involvement of the university and clear communication were identified as key factors in successful partnerships.

In the Vietnamese context, research on SL remains limited. While a few studies exist, they predominantly focus on investigating the perceptions and attitudes of Vietnamese EFL teachers and students regarding SL. For instance, Truong et al. (2020) conducted a study involving 61 teachers and 201 students at a foreign language university in central Vietnam. Their research explored perceptions of SL, the role of the school, benefits for teachers and students, and the feasibility of integrating SL. The findings demonstrated strong support among both teachers and students for SL as a valuable tool to promote personal, academic, and professional growth. In another study by Truong et al. (2023), 78 fourth-year English pedagogy students were examined following their participation in an SL-integrated teaching practicum unit within EFL community classes. The results revealed that all students held favorable attitudes towards SL and the teaching practicum unit, which positively influenced their personal development, classroom management skills, professional growth, and community engagement. However, regarding studies examining community members' perceptions of SL, there is little research conducted to explore this issue in the Vietnamese context.

It can be noticed that existing research in international contexts has provided valuable insights into community engagement in SL, most of which involved community partners from a wide range of organizations and of different disciplines. The diversity of organizations and disciplines might have led to varying expectations, experiences, and perceived value. Previous studies have taken a broader perspective or focused on different educational fields, leaving the

field of teacher education thoroughly unexplored. Moreover, in Vietnamese contexts, little is known on the perceptions of CMs on impacts of SL activities of PSTs in the field of ELT. Therefore, a notable gap remains regarding the perceptions of CMs specifically in the realm of PSTs' SL activities in the field of ELT. This study was conducted with the hope of filling this gap.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design

The research was conducted exclusively qualitatively, employing semi-structured interviews in which the researcher asked open-ended questions. This approach was chosen since one of its significant characteristics is to examine a problem and deepen a detailed understanding of a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2012), and to supply researchers with real, rich and deep data (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991). The use of open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews could facilitate the collection of rich, authentic, and context-specific data as CMs were enabled to freely articulate their experiences, opinions, and feelings in, which are not constrained by predefined response options (Adams, 2015). Moreover, as little research exists on CMs' perspectives of SL, qualitative research can be useful for offering a greater degree of flexibility, in which "the data collection and analysis process can be adapted as new ideas or patterns emerge", in order to "uncover novel problems or opportunities that researchers wouldn't have thought of otherwise" (Bhandari, 2023).

3.2 Research setting

The study focused on three local primary schools (PSs) in a city located in Central Vietnam. These schools have cooperated with a department of English of a university of foreign languages to organize SL activities for the last two or three years. Each year, groups of PSTs of this department, volunteering to participate in SL projects have been sent to these schools in the first semester to support PSs to organize English-related activities (extracurricular activities) aimed at fostering an English learning environment for primary school students (Ss) of Grade 3,4,5 under the guidance of primary school leaders (Ls) and primary school teachers (Ts) of the three PSs. PSTs were asked to design extracurricular activities whose topics were in line with the unit Ss were learning in the textbook or aligned with weekly topics of the PSs. This project often lasted 7-8 weeks. Each week, PSTs would visit Ps two or three times to hold different English-related activities for Ss during twenty-minute breaks, or private sessions on Friday afternoon, or formal classes. Maximum commitment time per PST would be 2-3 hours per week. PSTs were assessed in terms of community service attitudes and teaching performance.

3.3 Research participants

Initially, the researcher proactively contacted Ls of several local PSs via emails which were provided by teacher educators (TEs) who have worked directly with Ls of the PSs in planning SL projects in recent years. The email provided detailed information of the research, including the objectives of the study, the nature of participation, and the expected time for interviews, and asked for permission to conduct interviews with Ls and Ts for their perceptions of SL activities of PSTs. Three Ts responded to the email, expressing their willingness to take part in the research. After that, the three Ls, who were familiar with the SL projects and the roles

of individual Ts, were informed that they would select one English teacher who had a substantial degree of involvement with SL activities and was willing to participate in the study. This approach could ensure that participants were chosen based on their direct experience and insights related to the SL activities and the collaborative work with PSTs. This approach also ensured that the recruitment process respected the Ls and Ts' autonomy, allowing them to decide whether they were willing to participate. They were not coerced or obliged to take part in the study.

Three female Ls and three female Ts were recruited, ranging from 30 to 55 years in age. Ls' experience in school leadership varied from 9 to 15 years while Ts' experience in teaching English varied from 6 to 25 years. Ls and Ts of the three PSs were the main collaborators and supervisors of the PSTs during SL activities. The research particularly focused on a small group of participants (six participants in total), which could help generate in-depth information of how CMs perceive SL activities of PSTs as more attention should be devoted to achieving a deeper understanding of the research problem than to the number of participants (Jones, 2002) and insights generated from qualitative inquiry have more to do with information-rich cases than with sample size (Morow, 2005).

3.4 Data collection tool

The major instrument employed in this study included semi-structured interviews with CMs to investigate their perceptions of SL activities of PSTs. The semi-structured interviews were conducted because they allow valuable information to be gained by offering the opportunity for the interviewer to probe and expand the interviewee's responses (Alshenqeeti, 2014). By using semi-structured interviews, which involve direct interactions with Ls and Ts, the researcher could probe their perceptions of SL activities of PSTs and obtain in-depth information. There were two main sets of total 6 open-ended questions included in the interview, aimed to examine CMs' perceptions of impacts of SL activities on primary school students (Ss) and PSTs' professional development.

3.5 Data collection procedure

Qualitative interviews helped to provide rich and thorough information in understanding CMs' experiences, attitudes and beliefs. However, qualitative inquiry might be challenging for novice researchers to adequately perform the interview. Moreover, some initial interview questions might be unclear or inappropriate. Therefore, piloting for an interview was significantly important. This process was considered as "an integral aspect and useful in the process of conducting qualitative research" (Majid et al., 2017) that helped the researchers improvise better to the major study. The interview was piloted among a school leader and a teacher who are currently working at a nearby primary school in Hue and have previously collaborated with PSTs to organize SL activities for Ss.

After the pilot study was carried out, the modified interview questions were officially used to conduct interviews with the six participants that had been previously chosen. The participants were informed in advance via email that they would be interviewed about the SL experiences for the purpose of doing a relevant study with the hope that they willingly continuously reflected on their experiences and provided trustworthy and in-depth information when taking part in the interview.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face at the CMs' schools and ranged from 30 to 45 minutes. The researchers got permission from CMs to record the interviews. While simple and understandable English interview questions were posed, CMs were informed to be able to answer in Vietnamese in the hope of minimizing drawbacks related to misunderstandings in the interviews as well as helping to reduce the psychological pressure on the CMs as the they often feel more anxious when being interviewed in a second language instead of their mother tongue (Marcos et al., 1973). By using Vietnamese, the CMs could comprehend the questions in the clearest and most accurate way possible, which was what the researchers intended. Moreover, the researchers tried to create a comfortable atmosphere for the CMs so that they could reflect on their thoughts and feelings. After each interview, the researchers typed a transcript and wrote a memo noting observations of the interview.

3.6 Data analysis

Analyzing data from the interviews involves the five following steps, based on suggestions of Campuslabs (n.d.). First, all interview recordings were carefully and thoroughly listened to and transcribed into written texts which were entirely typed out. Careful attention was given to issues related to translation to reduce the potential limitations. When some discrepancies and uncertainties in the translation were detected, the researchers proactively contacted the participants to make follow-up discussions and recheck the translation, ensuring that the interpretation of meaning remained accurate to the original meaning of the participants' responses. In the second phase, the researchers read and re-read the transcriptions to become familiar with the data and spot key themes. In the third phase, the relevant concepts, and patterns in the data were identified and labeled. This involved coding the data by assigning categories to sections of the texts. To ensure the reliability of the coding techniques, the researchers got another researcher to implement check-coding. She agreed to code one of the transcribed interviews. The inter-coding agreement reached about 70%, which is appropriate for qualitative data that are rich in analytical value (Riffe et al., 2019). In the fourth phase, the researchers grouped the categories into different themes based on their similarities or relationships. Finally, the researchers interpreted the data to identify the underlying meaning or significance of the themes. This involved making connections between the themes and drawing conclusions based on the data.

4. Results

The findings from the interviews are qualitatively presented under two main headings of community members' perceptions of impacts of SL activities on primary school students, and community members' perceptions of impacts of SL activities on professional development of the pre-service primary school teachers. These two themes together with their related subthemes are outlined in Table 1 below. In presenting the data extracts, the three primary school leaders (Ls) and primary school teachers (Ts) were referred to as Principal A, Principal B, Principal C, and Teacher A, Teacher B, Teacher C respectively in order to preserve anonymity.

Table 1. Coding framework for analysis of community members' perceptions

Themes	Subthemes
Impacts of SL activities on primary school students	Enhancing Ss' engagement
	Boosting Ss' confidence in English speaking
	Elevating Ss' motivation to learn English

Impacts of SL activities on the professional development of pre-service primary school teachers	
Experiencing context-based learning opportunities	Enhancing their knowledge of real contexts Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application Doing reflective practice
Enhancing pedagogical knowledge and skills	Lesson planning Classroom management Context-appropriate teaching strategies

4.1 Community members' perceptions of impacts of SL activities on primary school students

CMs held positive perceptions of contributions of SL activities of PSTs to Ss, with the beneficial impact on enhancing Ss' engagement and active participation, boosting Ss' confidence in using English to communicate, and elevating Ss' motivation to learn English. However, CMs shared that the impact of SL activities on students' knowledge of English and language skills was not seen clearly, but they believed these activities had a potential influence if they were systematically planned and regularly organized over the long run.

4.1.1 Enhancing Ss' engagement

The majority of CMs highlighted the positive influence of SL activities organized by PSTs on boosting Ss' engagement and active participation. One teacher shared that more and more Ss were *"eager to engage in the activities"* and they appeared to be *"very enthusiastic about asking questions, working with their peers and PSTs to complete the activities"* (Teacher A), even when participation was *"not compulsory",* as further explained by teacher C. In addition, Principal C revealed that Ss might perceive *"PSTs as more easy-going compared to Ts"*, which contributed to their growing affinity towards PSTs and their willingness to participate actively in the activities.

4.1.2 Boosting Ss' confidence in English speaking

CMs also recognized the positive impact of SL activities organized by PSTs on boosting Ss' confidence in using English to communicate. For example, their confidence was seen in their comfort of *"using the vocabulary and grammar they had learned to interact with their peers"* during the activities (Teacher C). Teacher B also highlighted the impact of SL activities on boosting Ss' confidence, which was reflected in sharing:

"Some Ss were previously silent in class and afraid of speaking English in front of others. However, they seemed to be more confident in speaking more English in my class. I noticed that they began to make small attempts to answer my questions in English." (Teacher B)

4.1.3 Elevating Ss' motivation to learn English

Additionally, CMs highlighted the contribution of PSTs in elevating Ss' motivation to learn English through SL activities. For example, Principal C shared that most Ss *"voluntarily participated in the activities"* organized by PSTs without external pressure or incentives. This highlighted the presence of their *"intrinsic motivation"* to learn English outside the classroom

setting. Teacher B further noted that an increase in Ss motivation to learn English was seen through how students *"eagerly looked forward to and prepared for upcoming SL activities"*.

Having recognized that improvements in language proficiency require *"long-term effort and consistent learning experiences"* (Principal A), most Ls emphasized the need for a process-oriented approach in evaluating the impact of SL activities on Ss' knowledge of English and language skills. Principal A emphasized *"regular visits have a direct correlation with the impact of extracurricular activities"*. Principal C also highlighted the significance of developing *"a systematic plan"* for SL activities. She shared:

"I think when it comes to doing something, it takes a process. Therefore, I attach great importance to building a systematic plan for SL activities. We need to clearly state what the plan's ultimate goal will be. From there, we can evaluate whether the implementation process is achieving the desired results or not." (Principal C)

4.2 Community members' perceptions of impact of SL activities on the professional development of pre-service primary school teachers

Besides the contributions of SL projects to the community, CMs also perceived the positive impacts of SL on PSTs' professional development in terms of context-based learning opportunities, and pedagogical knowledge and skill development.

4.2.1 Experiencing context-based learning opportunities

Most CMs mentioned SL offered PSTs valuable opportunities to learn through actual and practical experience. Their context-based learning was reflected in how SL helped PSTs enhance their knowledge of real contexts, bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application, and do reflective practice.

Enhancing their knowledge of real contexts

Doing SL activities at PSs was thought to have helped PSTs enhance their knowledge of real primary school teaching context. Firstly, it helped them gain *"insights into the actual dynamics of real class"*, allowing them to *"observe how different Ss responded to different teaching approaches, group dynamics and activity structures"* and understand how to *"differentiate Ss' interests, learning styles, and communication patterns"* (Teacher B). PSTs also gained a tangible understanding of *"classroom management, student engagement, and instructional delivery"* as they stood in front of a class, guided activities, and interacted with students directly (Principal A).

Bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application

Engaging in SL activities at PSs was considered to have helped PSTs bridge the knowledge gap between theory and practical application. Both Teacher A and Principal C highlighted that the *"practical environment"* of teaching Ss at PSs provided PSTs with a unique opportunity to *"apply theoretical knowledge in authentic settings"*. Teacher A further explained

"The classroom environment of PSs provided PSTs with a rich canvas for adapting teaching strategies they had learned at university. Based on the dynamic needs and responses of

Ss, they modified instructions on the spot, changed activity pacing, and employed creative solutions to address unexpected challenges." (Teacher A)

Doing reflective practice

It was believed that participating in SL activities at PSs enhanced PSTs' learning through reflective practice. Teacher A expressed that when PSTs encountered moments where *"things didn't go as planned,* they might ask themselves questions such as *"What could I have done differently?"* or *"How could I better engage Ss next time?".* Similarly, Teacher C emphasized that learning from mistakes was a form of reflective practice. Through *"trial and error",* PSTs were motivated to *"analyze what went wrong and why"* (Teacher C). This reflective process fostered self-awareness and a commitment to continuous improvement.

4.2.2 Enhancing pedagogical knowledge and skills

Most CMs mentioned SL gave PSTs valuable opportunities to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills, particularly in the area of lesson planning, classroom management, and context-appropriate teaching strategies.

Lesson planning

First, participating in SL activities at PSs was thought to have helped foster the development of PSTs' lesson planning knowledge and skills. For example, Teacher A shared that through organizing SL activities PSTs learned about *"the procedure of lesson planning",* from *"selecting the topic",* *"establishing learning goals",* *"designing the activities",* to *"determining time allotted for each activity"* and *"preparing teaching materials".* Principal B also highlighted that PSTs learned that lesson plans were *"not only engaging and diverse but also well-structured".* Because one session only lasted 20-25 minutes and PSTs often organized 3-4 activities, PSTs needed to plan the lesson in which they effectively *"sequence activities in the time frame permitted to achieve the lesson's objectives"* (Principal B).

Classroom management

Second, doing SL activities at PSs was thought to have helped PSTs develop classroom management skills, including time management, behavior management, and instruction giving skills. In terms of time management, PSTs had to *"improvise"* and *"pace"* to ensure that *"planned activities were completed within the given time frame"* and that *"Ss remained enjoyable and kept motivated to participate"* (Teacher A). As for behavior management, Teacher B elaborated on how organizing activities contributed to *"PSTs' ability to anticipate potential disruptions"* and *"proactively implement strategies to manage Ss' behavior".* Moreover, Teacher A pointed out that after a few weeks PSTs interacted with Ss, they were more likely to reconsider *"adjusting vocabulary choices and sentence structures"* so that *"Ss could understand the task and its objectives".* This can be seen as an indication of PSTs' improvements in giving instructions.

Context-appropriate teaching strategies

Third, the engagement with Ss in organizing SL activities was believed to contribute to PSTs' skills of developing context-appropriate teaching strategies. For instance, Principal C noted that implementing SL activities exposed PSTs to the concept of *"differentiated instruction",*

wherein they tailored their teaching strategies to accommodate *"varying Ss' levels of proficiency, learning styles, and interests"*. She also shared:

"Through SL learning, I think PSTs would learn how to design activities that were appropriately challenging to stimulate cognitive growth of advanced Ss, while also being accessible enough to prevent frustration among those who might require additional support, keeping all students engaged and motivated to learn." (Principal C)

5. Discussions

5.1 Impacts of SL activities on primary school students

CMs highlighted the positive influence of PSTs on Ss' engagement, confidence in using English, and motivation to learn English. While students in Vietnam are often known for low motivation to learn English (Nguyen et al., 2016; Vu, 2016) and reluctance to use English inside and outside the classroom (Phan, 2021; Vu, 2016), providing students with more opportunities to use English through similar SL projects, as in this study, is potentially a solution to English teaching and learning. Furthermore, while previous research has predominantly focused on the impacts of SL on PSTs (Jodaan & Mennega, 2022; Lai, 2017; Truong et al., 2020; Truong et al., 2023), the current study further our understanding by shedding light on the effects of SL on school students. This also supports Sigmon's argument (1979), which describes SL as an educational strategy based on reciprocal learning, wherein both the service providers and the recipients stand to benefit from the SL activities.

5.2 Impact of SL on pre-service primary school teachers' professional development

The findings from this study revealed that SL offered PSTs valuable opportunities to enhance their knowledge of genuine educational contexts, bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its practical application, and foster reflective practice. These findings extend Petri's (2015) research, which previously highlighted SL's positive influence on PSTs by enhancing their understanding of classroom dynamics, adaptability, and the cultivation of reflective teaching approaches. Studies often report that teacher education programs in Vietnam provide PSTs with limited opportunity to cultivate their contextual knowledge (Nguyen, 2013). The findings of this study suggest that SL may act as a potential solution to these problems in Vietnamese settings, as it offers PSTs more time to be exposed to real-life contexts alongside practicum.

The findings from this study also showed that SL gave PSTs valuable opportunities to enhance their pedagogical knowledge and skills, particularly in the area of lesson planning, and classroom management and giving instructions. These skills were considered particularly critical for teachers teaching English to young learners (Shin & Crandall, 2014). Engaging in the dynamics of authentic teaching context, PSTs became more aware of the importance of classroom management knowledge and skills. Interacting with students, PSTs had opportunities to reflect and learn from their failures, for example, in capturing students' attention due to long instructions and complicated classroom language. The PSTs then adjusted their instructions or classroom language, as being observed by CMs. These findings support previous research studies conducted by Jordaan and Mennega (2022) and Truong et al. (2023), both of which emphasized the role of

SL in nurturing essential work-related skills among PSTs and preparing them to confront the multifaceted challenges and subtleties inherent in real teaching settings.

6. Conclusion

To sum up, almost all the findings reveal that CMs hold positive perceptions of impacts of SL on primary school students and pre-service primary school teachers. First, CMs noted favorable impacts on Ss, including increased engagement, confidence in using English, and motivation to learn. Second, the findings showed that CMs recognized the significant positive impacts of SL on the professional development of PSTs. They noted that SL experiences enabled PSTs to develop context-based learning, and refine pedagogical knowledge and skills.

The findings of this study lead us to some implications and recommendations. First, SL should be integrated into teacher education to equip PSTs with context-based learning, bridging the gap between theory and practice. Teacher education programs should also prioritize the development of collaborative community-campus partnerships to facilitate SL. These partnerships could involve local schools or educational institutions, allowing PSTs to engage directly with authentic teaching environments, gaining practical experience while contributing meaningfully to the community. Second, recognizing positive impacts of SL on primary school students, primary school leaders and primary school teachers should be encouraged to incorporate SL activities as a regular part of their curriculum. This entails providing necessary resources, support, and training to teachers in designing and implementing effective SL programs. Moreover, continuous and long-term planning is essential to maximize the potential benefits of SL activities on students' language skills. This includes establishing a structured framework for SL initiatives that align with the curriculum objectives and allow for systematic implementation over an extended period.

The study has illuminated significant insights into the perceptions of CMs regarding SL activities of PSTs. However, there remain several intriguing gaps and unanswered questions that warrant further exploration. First, future research could take a longitudinal approach to assess the long-term impact of service-learning on PST's pedagogical practices, professional development, and community engagement, unveiling the transformative potential of service-learning. Involving PSTs can enhance our understanding of the impacts of SL projects on their professional development from their own perspectives. Moreover, as faculty members play a pivotal role in facilitating service-learning activities, exploring faculty members' perspectives on challenges, benefits, and effective implementation strategies could provide insights into the educators' role in fostering successful community partnerships and integrating service-learning into teacher education programs. Also, to understand the influence of SL projects on school teachers, future researchers may survey school students and test the impacts of SL on students' improvement of language proficiency. Finally, incorporating quantitative assessments, such as surveys or assessments, in future research can quantify the tangible impact of SL activities.

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HOẠT ĐỘNG HỌC TẬP PHỤC VỤ CỘNG ĐỒNG CỦA SINH VIÊN CHUYÊN NGÀNH SƯ PHẠM TIẾNG ANH BẬC TIỂU HỌC: NHẬN THỨC CỦA CÁC THÀNH VIÊN TRONG CỘNG ĐỒNG

Tóm tắt: Nghiên cứu được tiến hành để tìm hiểu nhận thức của các thành viên trong cộng đồng (CĐ) về hoạt động học tập phục vụ cộng đồng (HTPVCĐ) của sinh viên chuyên ngành Sư phạm Tiếng anh bậc tiểu học (SV) của một trường đại học ở Việt Nam. Cụ thể hơn, nghiên cứu này tập trung vào điều tra nhận thức của CĐ về những tác động của hoạt động HTPVCĐ được tổ chức ở các trường tiểu học đối với học sinh tiểu học và sự phát triển chuyên môn của SV. Để thu thập dữ liệu cho nghiên cứu này, các cuộc phỏng vấn đã được tiến hành với các hiệu trưởng và các giáo viên Tiếng anh tại ba trường tiểu học, những người trực tiếp tham gia vào việc tổ chức hoạt động HTPVCĐ của SV tại trường của họ. Kết quả cho thấy hoạt động HTPVCĐ tác động tích cực đến sự phát triển nghề nghiệp của SV thông qua việc cung cấp cơ hội học tập dựa trên bối cảnh thực tế và cơ hội phát kiến thức và kĩ năng chuyên môn. Bên cạnh đó, CĐ cũng tin rằng hoạt động HTPVCĐ cải thiện sự tham gia, động lực, và tự tin của học sinh tiểu học trong việc học tiếng Anh. Bài báo đưa ra những tác động đối với các nhà giáo dục giáo viên và các nhà quản lý trường học.

Từ khoá: hoạt động học tập phục vụ cộng đồng, thành viên cộng đồng, nhận thức, sinh viên chuyên ngành Sư phạm Tiếng anh bậc tiểu học, Việt Nam