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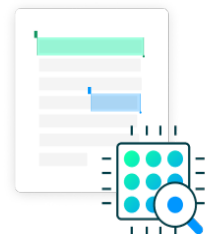
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EFL Pre-service Teachers' Leadership Project Practices in Indonesia's Teacher Professional Development Program

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Abstract

Indonesia's Ministry of Education has integrated the Leadership Project course into the Pendidikan Profesi Guru (PPG) program, emphasizing the development of professional qualifications and leadership skills among EFL pre-service teachers. This study scrutinizes the influence of both conceptual and practical frameworks of the course on cultivating leadership competencies. It poses two pivotal questions: Firstly, how do pre-service EFL teachers perceive these frameworks within leadership projects? Secondly, what challenges do they face in executing these projects effectively? Utilizing an explanatory mixed-methods design, the study collated and analyzed data from 31 participants through surveys and inductive thematic coding. It revealed that while EFL pre-service teachers have a positive reception of leadership involving collective knowledge and change initiation, they also report significant hurdles. Implementing complex frameworks like Sustainability NEWS (Nature, Economy, Well-being, Society) and Appreciative Inquiry presented difficulties, predominantly due to time limitations and communication barriers with target groups. Furthermore, a gap in understanding the conceptual underpinnings led to complications in the planning and sustainable implementation of projects, exacerbated by tight schedules and financial restrictions. Feedback from participants highlighted a need for program enhancements, suggesting refined policies, more rigorous consultation processes, and an enriched focus on reflective practices. The study offers valuable insights into the perceptions of EFL pre-service teachers regarding leadership programs.

Keywords: EFL pre-service teachers, leadership project course, PPG, teacher professional development

INTRODUCTION

Leadership practices in Indonesia's educational system, including various models, principals' roles, pre-service teachers' practices, perceptions of educational leadership, and strategies to address leadership issues, have garnered significant attention (Sofo et al., 2012; Kadiyono et al., 2020; Eyal & Roth, 2010; Aydin et al., 2013; Ozgenel & Karsantik, 2020; Kuswandono, 2017; Aziz et al., 2020; Gaol, 2021). In response, the Indonesian

Ministry of Education has included the "Projek Kepemimpinan" or Leadership Project course as a mandatory component in the Indonesian Teachers' professional development program. Despite the existing research on leadership practices and their impact, there's a notable gap in formal leadership training for pre-service teachers, especially those in English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This lack of formal training, along with political mandates (Björk, 2003) and limited opportunities (Campbell-Evans et al., 2014), may contribute to EFL pre-service teachers' reluctance to take on leadership roles. This study, therefore, aims to evaluate the formal leadership training and practices in Indonesia's professional development program, focusing on the impact of the Leadership Project course on EFL pre-service teachers' experiential leadership practices within the PPG program.

Additionally, educational leadership studies often emphasize its relationship with students' academic performance and overall school impact (Clemson-Ingram & Fessler, 1997; Devos & Bouckenoghe, 2009; Bush & Glover, 2003; Grissom & Loeb, 2011). However, with evolving educational policies, it's crucial for pre-service teachers to be prepared as future leaders who recognize leadership as a transformational process. Kegan and Lahey (2009) argue that transformative leadership development should encompass changes in actions, perspectives, attitudes, and ways of thinking. Furthermore, teacher leadership needs to be versatile, inquiry-driven, collaborative, innovative, analytical, entrepreneurial, and advocacy-oriented (Smylie & Eckert, 2017). Therefore, teacher leadership extends beyond academic achievement, encompassing broader community collaboration and service. The Leadership Project course addresses this need by offering a collective and collaborative experiential learning experience that promotes transformational leadership. It focuses on nurturing pre-service teachers' leadership qualities through appreciative inquiry, enabling them to develop sustainable projects that positively impact the communities they serve (Dharma & Radyati, 2022).

The Leadership Project course is designed to enhance students' leadership skills through school or community-based service-learning projects, which help students become more attuned to the needs of their project targets (Dharma & Radyati, 2022). This experiential learning approach employs two methods: it models leadership traits and gives students opportunities to exercise direct leadership through activities like observing, sensing, leading, and reflecting. Bush and Glover (2003) have identified three key dimensions of leadership that underpin the Leadership Project course: (1) Leadership as an influence process shaping organizational dynamics, (2) Leadership involving commitment to an organization's values, and (3) Effective leadership requiring a clear vision. The course aims for students to develop various leadership components such as social-emotional skills, project management, collaboration, needs analysis, decision-making, and empathy.

Besides, the Leadership Project course incorporates two fundamental frameworks: Sustainability NEWS and Appreciative Inquiry. It promotes systems thinking, encouraging students to perceive elements as part of a holistic system. The Sustainability NEWS framework guides students to understand and focus on the elements that constitute a system in a community or organization. As Dharma and Radyati (2022) explain, NEWS represents Nature, Economy, Well-being, and Society. Students work in small groups to select and investigate one of these dimensions for their course projects. The Appreciative Inquiry (AI) model, initially proposed by David Cooperrider in 1980, emphasizes

recognizing and leveraging the positive attributes of individuals to benefit a group or community. As noted by Cooperrider and Whitney (2005), AI is a collaborative effort to uncover the positive, powerful aspects of individuals in an organization and its environment, whether past, present, or future. AI implicitly demands a leadership skill that can harness and activate potential to achieve impactful outcomes, echoing Peter F. Drucker's view on leadership as cited in Dharma and Radyati (2022): "The task of leadership is to create an alignment of strengths so strong that it makes the system's weakness irrelevant" (p. 23).

Furthermore, this study investigates the impacts of the Leadership Project course in the context of EFL pre-service teacher education. The course is a crucial component of the Indonesian Teachers' professional development program, aiming to enhance leadership skills through practical, service-oriented projects. The research focuses on two primary objectives. Firstly, it aims to gauge the extent to which EFL pre-service teachers understand and appreciate the conceptual and practical elements of the leadership projects. This includes assessing their comprehension of the course's aims, its methodologies, and the relevance of these elements in real-world applications. Secondly, the study seeks to identify the challenges these pre-service teachers encounter during their participation in the Leadership Project services. By addressing these aspects, the research intends to provide insights into the effectiveness of the Leadership Project course in preparing EFL pre-service teachers for future leadership roles and to suggest improvements for the course's design and implementation, ensuring it more effectively equips future teachers with essential leadership skills and competencies.

METHOD

This research utilized an explanatory mixed-methods approach, incorporating an explanatory sequential design as delineated by Ivankova et al. (2006), which involves a two-phased approach, starting with quantitative and followed by qualitative data collection and analysis. Following Creswell (2003), this methodology acknowledges that quantitative data provides a broad overview of the research issue, while qualitative data grants a more detailed exploration of the participants' viewpoints and insights, thus enhancing the overall comprehension of the findings. The study commenced with a survey distributed to 31 EFL pre-service teachers from the PPG program at Sanata Dharma University Yogyakarta, chosen due to their completion of the relevant course and projects. The survey results informed the subsequent qualitative phase, where interviews with six participants investigated their experiences and challenges faced. This mixed-methods design, based on Creswell's (2015) framework, enabled a comprehensive analysis by first establishing a general understanding through quantitative data and then contextualizing these findings within the lived experiences of participants through qualitative inquiry.

To investigate students' perceptions of the Leadership Project course, the study implemented a quantitative methodology, employing a questionnaire with Likert-scale (*Strongly disagree, disagree, fairly disagree, fairly agree, agree, strongly agree*) items as the primary instrument. This questionnaire was designed to assess the implementation of the course's conceptual frameworks within the experiential leadership service, with a particular focus on Appreciative Inquiry and Sustainability News. The statements on the questionnaire were informed by the Leadership Project module blueprint—for instance,

assessing the ease of applying the Appreciative Inquiry stages (Define, Dream, Design, Deliver, known by the acronym BAGJA in Indonesian) in students' leadership projects. Additionally, the questionnaire was refined based on insights from a focus group discussion with students, which underscored the program's conceptual underpinnings and the practical aspects of project execution, such as the feasibility of completing the Leadership Program projects within the allocated one-credit timeframe.

To thoroughly evaluate students' perceptions, the research utilized both Likert-scale statements for quantitative assessment and open-ended questions for qualitative insights. The Likert-scale data were statistically analyzed to determine mean scores for each statement, providing a quantitative measure of the students' perspectives. Concurrently, the qualitative data from the open-ended questions underwent thematic coding to discern recurring themes, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the student's experiences and feedback on the course's conceptual and practical elements. This dual approach enabled a comprehensive analysis of student perceptions, combining both broad trends from the Likert-scale data and in-depth insights from the open-ended responses.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The online survey executed at Sanata Dharma University to evaluate the Leadership Project course garnered complete responses from 31 EFL pre-service teachers. The data analysis involved categorizing the open-ended responses from the questionnaire to complement the Likert-scale data, ultimately organizing the statements into four overarching categories: the conceptual framework, the practical framework, project engagement, and future career prospects. This categorization served to depict a comprehensive picture of the Leadership Project course, particularly focusing on the students' perceptions of the project's execution.



Figure 1. Leadership Project Coding Result

Besides, Figure 3 visually encapsulates the summary of students' perceptions. It illustrates the interrelationship between the conceptual and practical frameworks of the Leadership Project, the student's engagement with the projects, and the projected impact on their future career prospects. Central to the diagram is the "Leadership Project (LP)"

bubble, which is connected to and influenced by inputs on the left side, including leadership perception, the application of Sustainability NEWS in practice, and the 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry. These inputs feed into the two primary aspects of the course: project engagement, denoted by collaborative aspects like shared visions and open communication, and future career prospects, which consider the long-term effects on formal leadership services.

On the right side, the outcomes of the Leadership Project are outlined in terms of practical elements such as timeframe, project sustainability, and project management. These elements are critical in shaping the overall effectiveness and impact of the Leadership Project on students' leadership development. Together, the figure and the survey data tell a story of how the course is perceived to fulfil its objectives, engage students in meaningful leadership activities, and potentially influence their future roles as educators.

Figure 1. Students' perceptions of the Leadership Project course

Statement	SD	D	FD	FA	A	SA
I have a fixed understanding of what leadership is before and after taking the Leadership Program.	0.0%	6.5%	9.7%	0.0%	25.8%	58.1%
The theoretical framework of leadership (sustainable NEWS; Nature, Economy, Well-being, Society) is quite challenging and difficult to implement.	0.0%	6.5%	16.1%	0.0%	32.3%	45.2%
The Appreciative Inquiry framework (Define, Dream, Design, Deliver - BAGJA) is easily applicable to my leadership project.	0.0%	23.7%	13.2%	0.0%	26.3%	36.8%
Projects in the Leadership Program are achievable within the assigned timeframe (1 credit).	16.1%	25.8%	0.0%	22.6%	35.5%	0.0%
I am really satisfied with the planning and implementation process of the Leadership Project.	3.2%	19.4%	0.0%	29.0%	29.0%	19.4%
The projects are manageable and flexible in terms of time, finances, and quality control.	3.2%	12.9%	35.5%	0.0%	32.3%	16.1%
I am really confident that the implementation of my service-learning project can be independently implemented in the long run by the targeted subjects (not contemporary).	3.2%	0.0%	0.0%	16.1%	38.7%	41.9%
Our group project reflects our shared visions and collaborative effort.	0.0%	6.5%	0.0%	19.4%	45.2%	29.0%
I find it easy and comfortable to share my personal vision and thoughts with the group.	0.0%	12.9%	0.0%	22.6%	25.8%	38.7%
The Leadership Project has enhanced my prospects for a future career by	0.0%	6.5%	0.0%	19.4%	45.2%	29.0%

developing my professional leadership skills.

Leadership Perception

Perception shifts occur with the introduction of innovative practices. The Leadership Project course, through experiential learning and collaborative projects, offers a new lens on leadership (Dharma & Radyati, 2022). Reza (2019), leadership is transformative, reshaping perceptions and inspiring ambitious goals. Most participants (58.1%) reinforced their view of leadership as knowledgeable and diversity-embracing change agents during the course. One participant redefined teacher leadership as empowering beyond hierarchical roles, resonating with Danielson (2006), who views leadership as action-driven. Furthermore, 25% of participants realized leadership's potential to build high-performing teams (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005) and unify diverse perspectives after the course. However, for two participants (6.5%), the concept of leadership was completely new, having not been exposed to it before. The course's basis in Sustainably NEWS (Nature, Economy, Well-being, Society) and Adaptive Inquiry allowed them to see teacher leadership as extending past formal classroom duties (Harris & Jones, 2019) and promoting change via community service.

Sustainability NEWS (Nature, Economy, Well-being, Society) in Practice

The Leadership Project module incorporates the Sustainability NEWS framework to help identify and leverage assets or potentials within the ecosystem of the project's target community (Dharma & Radyati, 2022). This framework aims to clarify the interconnections and interactions among assets within the complex systems of Nature, Economy, Well-being, and Society (NEWS) and how these dimensions can influence the target communities of the project. Participants applied this framework to craft plans aimed at enhancing educational services by capitalizing on strengths and opportunities within these four dimensions in schools or communities.

The survey revealed mixed responses regarding the ease of implementing Sustainability NEWS. Over half of the participants (16.1% strongly agreed; 45.2% agreed) reported challenges, citing reasons such as unrelatable and unsustainable project topics, a lack of education-focused options, and incomplete dimension coverage. However, 32.3% found the application of Sustainability NEWS somewhat straightforward, arguing that despite its complexity, it was feasible with well-defined objectives, measurable outcomes, and collaborative efforts with the schools or communities involved. The primary concern for these students was the constraint of time. A small percentage (6.5%) encountered difficulties in applying Sustainability NEWS. During interviews, they highlighted that successful implementation hinged on effective teamwork and the selection of simple, achievable projects.

The 5-D Cycle of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry (AI), as described by Whitney and Trosten (2010), focuses on amplifying an organization's strengths instead of fixing its weaknesses, which is typical of conventional problem-solving. They stress the importance of concentrating on positive commonalities within a group. AI involves a 5-D cycle: define, discover, dream, design, and

deliver, which guides collaborative efforts in organizations and communities. The application of AI, or BAGJA as it is referred to in Indonesian, was seen positively by a majority of students—with 13.2% strongly agreeing and 36.8% agreeing—that it was straightforward to apply to their projects due to its clear and systematic nature. This clarity facilitated their collective work with targeted schools or communities, embodying what Whitney et al. (2019) suggest about AI: it fosters collaborative and simultaneous knowledge and meaning creation, allowing for the integration of diverse perspectives. A participant shared how minimal effort was required to identify and develop the potential within their target community. Nonetheless, some students (26.3%) faced challenges, such as selecting suitable long-term project targets or coordinating schedules for direct community engagement. Despite the generally positive feedback, 26.3% found the 5-D cycle difficult to implement, citing limited theoretical knowledge and a disconnect between expectations and actual delivery.

Project Time Frame

Proper scheduling ensures projects are completed on time through planned, sequenced activities and effective use of resources. In the Leadership Project at Sanata Dharma University, students took two courses: the first on project management theory and the second on executing these plans. Due to a condensed semester schedule, students had about two months to complete their projects while also fulfilling other program requirements. Survey responses indicated mixed views on the feasibility of this timeline. While 22.6% of students felt the projects were achievable within two months due to thorough preparation, a majority believed that more time would have allowed for better execution and problem-solving. Specifically, 35.5% somewhat agreed, and 25.8% disagreed, suggesting that an extended timeline could improve monitoring, evaluation, and outcomes. Those who strongly disagreed (16.1%) felt that the short period led to projects that were more formal than impactful. The concerns raised included insufficient time for detailed preparation, demanding project topics, a skewed credit allocation favouring theory over practice, and limited time for quality control. These findings indicate a need to reconsider the credit allocation for the practical implementation stage to enhance project outcomes.

Project Sustainability

A core objective of the Leadership Project program is to foster sustainable projects that not only aid in the leadership development of students but also provide lasting benefits to the involved schools or communities, with an emphasis on the Sustainability NEWS framework (Dharma & Radyati, 2022). Kuhlman and Farrington (2010) align project sustainability with the 'triple bottom line' concept, embracing economic, social, and environmental dimensions, with well-being intersecting the social and economic aspects. Sustainability in projects is crucial for fostering outcomes that are economically, environmentally, and socially beneficial in a long-lasting and equitable manner. Students were tasked with assessing the sustainability of their projects post-implementation. A majority were optimistic about the projects' continued success without further aid (19.4% agreed; 29.0% somewhat agreed), citing reasons such as official adoption by schools, no additional costs yet significant impact, and enthusiastic responses from stakeholders. Conversely, some students expressed concerns about the longevity of the projects once

their direct involvement ended. Those who disagreed (19.4%) or strongly disagreed (3.2%) pointed to issues like shifting school priorities, inadequate human resources, and a lack of clear leadership for project continuation, leading to projects that were more ceremonial than substantial. They observed that without designated responsibility, the communities involved would require considerable motivation to maintain the initiatives.

Project Management

Shifting from traditional project management focused solely on time, budget, and quality to also considering the project's broader impacts on society, the environment, and the economy is crucial for sustainability (Silvius & Schipper, 2014, p. 78). This broader view is essential for meeting sustainability goals. Project maturity, as defined by Kerzner (2019, p. 24), is the ongoing improvement process in project delivery to enhance an organization's ability to achieve its objectives. In this context, students worked in groups to identify the needs of their target participants and aimed to develop projects that would be implemented and evaluated for their potential impact. The Project Management Institute (2013) outlines project management processes encompassing time, cost, and quality management. Students evaluated their project management effectiveness, considering these aspects. Most students agreed that their projects were well-planned, addressing time allocation, financial needs (managed collectively), and quality control through group discussions, participant engagement, and lecturer consultations. Those who agreed (16.1% strongly; 32.3% agreed) noted that project scope—defined as the extent of project work—was crucial for subsequent steps like quality control and budgeting. Simpler projects were seen as more efficient. They likened project management to a relay race, emphasizing the need for subsequent stakeholders to take over the project sustainably.

However, managing cost and time proved challenging for some, as noted by Chow et al. (2021). Certain projects incurred substantial costs, leading students to use personal savings or seek sponsorship. Budgets were primarily allocated to workshops and project execution. The two-month timeline posed difficulties for thorough monitoring and evaluation. Despite these hurdles, students recognized the positive impact of intensive feedback from lecturers on project quality. While the groups led the execution, the mentor's guidance was vital in reinforcing the project's planning and delivery stages.

Projects as Shared Visions

The Leadership Project course, designed as a collaborative, experiential learning program, requires students to work together on issues, utilizing potentials within schools or communities to support the Sustainability NEWS framework through appreciative inquiry (Dharma & Radyati, 2022). Essential to this process is the development of a shared vision, which is crucial in the initial cycle of topic selection. Shared visions in a project set clear goals and directions, aligning with Burns' concept of transformative leadership (1978), which motivates followers towards common objectives (cited in Reza, 2019). Chai et al. (2017) assert that transformational leadership positively influences team members' shared vision at a team level, emphasizing that trust and commitment within the team are vital for aligning individual and group visions.

A significant portion of the students (38.7% agreed; 41.9% strongly agreed) viewed their project as a culmination of combined values developed through intensive group discussions and consultations before receiving mentor approval. Initially, many felt overwhelmed by the flurry of ideas within their groups, leading to confusion. However,

through mentor guidance, they were able to converge on a clear topic with defined objectives. A minority (16.1%) who somewhat agreed experienced challenges in collaboration, engaging in negotiations to refine their leadership skills. Contrarily, one student (3.2%) expressed disappointment, feeling that the project did not adequately incorporate everyone's ideas and was dominated by a single vision, highlighting issues in open communication and team dynamics.

Open Communication

Thomas et al. (2009) emphasize the importance of willingness to share opinions openly for effective communication within a group, as open communication fosters greater involvement and engagement. While not all participants experienced such open discussions, most acknowledged that they could express their feelings and ideas openly and flexibly within their groups. A notable 29.0% who strongly agreed highlighted their use of a systematic, collective decision-making process, as described by Bose et al. (2017), which avoided centralization and encouraged member participation. The participants also noted how the characteristics of group members, such as being supportive, respectful, open-minded, and flexible, influenced the project process, aligning with Bose et al.'s concept of collective behaviour.

However, group dynamics often involve disagreements, leading to a sense of vulnerability, which Brown (2018) identifies as crucial in collaborative work. Vulnerability fosters trust and encourages openness and honesty. Yet, 25.9% of students who disagreed with the statement about effective group communication struggled with this vulnerability. They felt apprehensive about possibly offending others with their responses or being perceived as nonsensical. Brown (2018) suggests that some individuals might find collaborative work challenging, especially when assuming leadership roles. Additionally, some students mentioned the issue of passivity, where reliance on other group members hindered open communication, impacting the overall group dynamics and effectiveness.

Students' Project Satisfaction

Project success is a crucial determinant of project satisfaction, as noted by Chow et al. (2021). The effectiveness of project management, encompassing aspects such as time, cost, and quality (Project Management Institute, 2013), serves as a metric for assessing student satisfaction with project outcomes. Despite encountering various challenges and limitations, a majority of PPG students expressed satisfaction with their project results. Specifically, 22.6% were strongly satisfied, and 38.7% were satisfied. Their positive outlook was influenced by the collaborative efforts of group members, the active participation and feedback from targeted schools and communities, and the guidance provided by their mentors, which contributed to the project's benefits and potential sustainability.

However, a group of students (25.8%) who found the project moderately successful identified key factors of dissatisfaction, including time allocation, project sustainability, collaboration quality, and overall project planning. Those who disagreed (12.9%) echoed these concerns but particularly highlighted issues arising from unexpected changes mid-project, which impacted project management, especially in terms of financial support. Despite these difficulties, they remained optimistic about the potential benefits of their projects for the targeted participants and their communities.

Future Career Prospect

The Leadership Project course, designed to equip future teachers with leadership skills for enduring contributions to teaching and learning, responds to the educational transformation in Indonesia (Dharma & Radyati, 2022). This course emphasizes transformational leadership through experiential projects, aligning with the necessity for teachers to adapt to educational changes. As highlighted by Stewart (2006), drawing on Bass and Reggi (2010) perspective, effective leaders are instrumental in driving social change, an aspect this course seeks to develop by encouraging students to identify potential in schools or communities for sustainability. Participant feedback indicated varied perceptions of the program's effectiveness in professional preparation. Those who strongly agreed or agreed (totalling 74.2%) valued the program for its practical application of theory and skill development in critical thinking and adaptability. However, a portion of students (19.4% fairly agreed) were uncertain about their ability to significantly influence school settings, considering their novice status.

Some participants did not perceive a substantial impact on their career prospects. One student's observations revealed that while teachers are adept at academic and administrative tasks, there's interest in non-academic involvement. This suggests a possible direction for future professional engagement. Nonetheless, the program's potential in shaping leadership development faces obstacles, such as administrative workload and limited support (Jomud et al., 2021; Ismailos et al., 2022), which could restrict teachers' capacity to innovate and apply observed leadership potential.

Challenges and Evaluation

Theory and Concept Understanding

Comprehending and applying the theoretical and conceptual aspects of leadership posed significant challenges for the participants, partly due to their limited exposure to experiential learning, which is vital for understanding and implementing the Sustainability NEWS framework. Kolb's (1984) theory of experiential learning suggests that knowledge emerges from active engagement and reflective, transformative experiences. This perspective was echoed by a participant who acknowledged their limited understanding stemmed from a lack of practical experience in this area.

"The implementation of Sustainability NEWS theory in leadership project is quite challenging to execute. It was because we were not familiar with the term and lacked the experience to work on non-academic projects" (Participant 5)

Considering the lack of knowledge that the participants experienced, they somehow managed to minimize the problem through implementing the Appreciative Inquiry (AI)/BAGJA. Rather than finding a problem to be solved, AI provides spaces for strengths and potentials as the asset and basis of the project (Cooperrider et al., 2008; Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005).

"Using BAGJA, our group can implement leadership project activities easily because it's organized systematically, making it easier for us to think through identifying the asset to the process of developing it" (Participant 1)

Communication and Communities' Demands

In the implementation, the participants often experienced poor communication that led to misunderstandings and delays both within the group members and in communities or schools. The participants were reluctant to communicate their goals and limitations to the targeted participants. When stakeholders have different values, it is still possible to find a middle ground through negotiation. However, the participants found the implementation to be different.

"The main issue is dealing with the community's high expectations about what our project could achieve. Trying to meet these big expectations put a lot of pressure on us, making it tough to deliver more than what was realistically possible with the time and resources we had. We needed to talk clearly with everyone and make sure we're all on the same page about what can be done" (Participant 4)

"In our project, we faced issues with time and funding. The limited time for implementation, especially for our long-term garden planting project, posed a challenge. We struggled to find donors due to the tight schedule and ended up using self-funding" (Participant 2)

Project Management

To manage the sustainability of a project, the processes of planning, monitoring, and control should be carefully implemented (Project Management Institute, 2017). However, the participants were challenged to control the project's long-term impacts, which mostly dealt with communities' commitment to continue the program. In the interview, the participants addressed their concerns related to the sustainable issue as follows.

"It was really tiring when we had to monitor and re-plan after knowing that our project only lasted for two weeks. The community didn't show much commitment, which was disappointing. Moreover, we had trouble with time and money for our garden project. We couldn't find donors in the short time we had, so we ended up using our own funds" (participant 1).

The participants identified miscommunication within their groups and communities during the initial planning and introduction of the project as a key challenge impacting project implementation and sustainability (Silvius & Schipper, 2014). Clear communication of processes and outcomes is essential for smooth project execution.

In response, they offered constructive feedback for enhancing the leadership project program. They proposed increasing the course credits for practical training, allowing for more hands-on experience and the application of theoretical knowledge in real-world scenarios. Additionally, they suggested more intensive and individualized consultations with lecturers to provide tailored guidance and support for their unique challenges. The participants also recommended a review of the block system's effectiveness in conjunction with the practicum teaching program to address time constraints, aiming to improve the program's structure. Moreover, they advocated for ongoing evaluation of individual reflections to gain a deeper understanding of student's progress and areas requiring additional support. These suggestions are in line with the study's focus on assessing the Leadership Project course's effectiveness in preparing future professional English teachers, emphasizing practical aspects of the projects and the importance of collaborative and collective work in developing teachers' leadership skills.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated how EFL pre-service teachers in an Indonesian Professional Development Program perceive the implementation of leadership projects and the challenges encountered. Participants experienced a conceptual shift towards a more comprehensive, collaborative approach in line with transformational leadership. Key elements like Sustainability NEWS, Appreciative Inquiry (AI), and project management played significant roles, offering both challenges and learning opportunities. While the 5-D AI framework was generally well-received, implementing Sustainability NEWS faced hurdles, particularly in aspects of communication and meeting community demands. Time constraints and sustainability issues underscored the need for effective communication and shared visions. Feedback from participants suggested enhancements in practical training, more in-depth mentor consultations, and improved evaluation methods, indicating awareness of areas needing improvement. Despite some difficulties, the participants reported overall satisfaction and recognized the program's role in preparing them for transformative leadership roles.

However, the study's focus was on the perceptions of pre-service teachers regarding the program. However, it had limitations, including time constraints and restricted access for evaluating practical project implementation. Future research could expand by exploring the perceptions of other stakeholders, like targeted participants, to better understand the projects' potential contributions to sustainable organizational or community development.

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