

**INTERNATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING THROUGH COMMUNITY
OUTREACH PROGRAM IN VILLAGES IN KEDIRI-EAST JAVA:
A STUDY ON STUDENTS' REFLECTION JOURNALS**

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Abstract

Community Outreach Program (COP) is an international service-learning program of Petra Christian University which has drawn many overseas students from the Netherlands, South Korea, Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan.

COP provides students with a multicultural environment to learn and to serve as a team in a village where the cultural background is different from them. This paper reports the study on reflection journals written by 51 students from Indonesia and overseas. The students' answers in the journals revealed the students' initial expectation in joining COP, their views about the village and its villagers, and the other participants' culture. Students' views about the village changed over time from negative to positive. It was also found that students faced more difficulties in communicating with fellow students of different nationalities rather than with the villagers. Many also said that they have accomplished their goals through participating in COP.

Introduction

COP is an international service-learning program which is carried out for 3-4 weeks in July-August every year. The program involves not only PCU students from various departments but also international students from seven overseas universities in Asia (South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, and Taiwan) and Europe (the Netherlands).

The rural area chosen for locations of COP in the last five years are villages in a regency of Kediri. Kediri is located about 150 km from PCU (Surabaya); it is a regency with a population of 1.4 million people and an area of 1,386.05 km² (Kondisi Geografi, 2007). There are 343 villages where people live as farmers (growing corn, rice, cassava, and vegetables). The majority of villagers are Moslems educated mostly to elementary school level.

Prior to the departure to the village, PCU students have to attend preparatory courses which cover topics of Service-Learning, Leadership, Team-Building, Project Management, Socio-Culture of Java, Participatory Approach, and Cross Cultural Understanding. The goals

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of these preparatory courses are to prepare the participants to adapt well during their stay in the village and be able to interact with the community as well as other participants and equip them with leadership and project management skills. PCU students who come from various faculties (mainly from Faculty of Civil Engineering and Planning) meet and interact during the COP preparatory courses which meet every week for eleven meetings. The first contact of PCU students with the villagers takes place during their first survey in the assigned villages. There, they meet the head of the village and influential villagers, and they do interviews and observations. Using the survey data, they will discuss within their group what programs and activities they will propose for community services in the village. Proposed activities are submitted and uploaded to the PCU website for an online-discussion with overseas participants. This online-discussion is their first interaction using English to communicate in writing with overseas participants. It was found that the online-discussion has not achieved its objective as not all of the students were active in using this medium to discuss the proposed programs based on survey data, but rather they used it to greet each other and introduce themselves.

Prior to departure to Indonesia, overseas participants undergo different preparatory approaches in their university, such as getting an overview about Indonesia and inviting COP alumni to share their experiences of COP from previous years.

A ratio of one to one of PCU students to overseas students is maintained in order to create a good balanced composition of teamwork. The team is diverse not only in terms of nationality but also in personality, culture, and discipline background. In the first week of the program, the students learn to adapt and simultaneously they are urged to start planning and discussing the activities and programs which will be proposed to be carried out during COP. Implementation of programs is done in the second and third weeks. The work done in villages during COP 2007 ranged considerably from education, like setting up a school library where they renovated and decorated the room, or teaching English and Science for young children; health, like building public toilets and running a campaign to encourage villagers to use clean water; and in the area of culture and friendship.

Research Method

The research was focused on 51 reflection journals written by 51 students at the end of COP. Those 51 students who were participants of COP 2007 were from Indonesia (40 students), 3 students from South Korea, 2 students from Japan, 3 students from Hong Kong, 2 students from Taiwan, and 1 student from the Netherlands. The total number of students joining COP 2007 was 135 students: 66 students from PCU (Indonesia) and 69 were overseas students with a composition of 31 South Korean students, 23 students from the Netherlands, 7 students from Hong Kong, 5 students from Japan, and 3 students from Taiwan.

The reflection journal is mandatory for PCU students but not for the overseas students. Therefore we did not have a complete set of reflection journals written by all overseas students.

In the journal, students were asked to reflect back on three periods (before, at midpoint, the end) of COP. Several questions were written to guide them in doing the reflection. The questions were open-ended, as shown below.

Pre- Program	At Midpoint	End-Program
1. General		
What did you hope to learn or achieve by participating in a COP?	How do you feel at the first two weeks?	a. Did you accomplish your goal? b. How does this relate to the course's concept? c. What have been the highlights of your experience?
2. The village		
How do you picture the village that you are going to stay?	What do you think of the village life and the villagers?	What do you think of the village life?
3. Culture		
	a. What do you learn about the community culture? b. What do you learn about other participants' culture?	a. What do you learn about the community culture? b. What do you learn about other participants' culture?
4. Communication and Teamwork		
	a. How do you communicate with the villagers? b. Do you have difficulties in communicating with the villagers? c. Do you have difficulties in communicating your ideas / working together with other participants?	What are your strategies to solve the communication problems?

The main purpose of asking those questions was to study the impact of COP on students' learning processes, the changes in their perspective toward social needs, international/ multicultural setting, and education. We also expected to obtain information on the unique experiences the students learned during COP. Answers from pre-program

questions were expected to reveal the initial goals and motives of the participants in joining COP and to get their view of a village. The students were also asked to reflect back to the mid and end periods of the program on what they found about the village, the cultural differences and difficulties faced in communication and teamwork. The answers given from those three time segments would give insight into the changes in students' views over time and learning toward the aspects of culture and multicultural environment, and life skills, like teamwork and communication and problem solving.

Results and Discussion

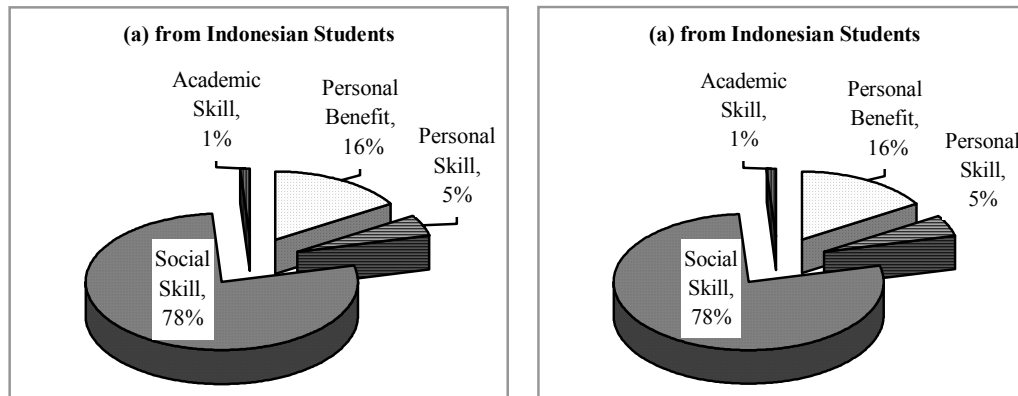
We went through every answer to each question, then classified answers into different categories/groups and counted the frequency of each answer. The aspects of cultural background and nationality were taken into account.

An open question was posed in the reflection journal about the students' expectations in participating in COP: "What did you hope to learn or achieve by participating in COP?" Students' initial expectations and their views on the culture of both the locals and the overseas participants varied among participants from various countries. Many wrote that they expected to make friends from different cultural backgrounds, gain new experiences, learn to work in a team, and help villagers. Table 1 shows the aspects that students wanted to achieve when participating in COP. There were 16 different answers or expectations which varied from improving their English, learning other culture, about knowing students' identity, and giving to others. Those 16 aspects mentioned in Table 1 are grouped into four categories. Those categories are personal skill (PS), social skill (SS), academic skill (AS), and getting personal benefits (PB). Aspects that are categorized as personal skills are skills needed to learn to understand oneself, self awareness and to solve problems. These skills are essential tools for understanding one's strengths and weaknesses. Aspects that are related with other people, community, communication and working in a team are grouped in social skills (skills for living in a society). The aspect covered by academic skills is to apply the theory learned.

Figure 1 shows that the highest expectation of students both from Indonesia and overseas was in the area of developing social skills. The students were aware that by joining COP, they would be exposed to diversity and would meet diverse individuals, i.e., their international friends in the group and the community in the village. This shows that these young people were aware of the differences in their backgrounds and wanted to learn from each other through friendship and teamwork (numbers 1 and 3).

Figure 1

The Number of Answers about Students' Expectations in Participating in COP 2007

**Table 1**

A List of Aspects Expected to Be Learned or to Be Achieved by Students by Participating in COP (Anggono, et al., 2009)

Number	Aspects	Frequencies		
		Indonesian Students	International Students	Total
1	To make friends from different cultures (SS)	17	6	23
2	To gain new experience (PB)	13	5	18
3	To learn teamwork (SS)	11	5	16
4	To help the villagers (SS)	7	9	16
5	To improve and practice English (SS)	7	6	13
6	To learn different culture (SS)	7	6	13
7	To communicate with villagers (SS)	6	2	8
8	To learn to live a simple life in the village (SS)	7	1	8
9	To apply the theory learned (AS)	1	5	6
10	To learn about myself (PS)	2	2	4
11	To learn Indonesian language (SS)	0	3	3
12	To learn to live with foreigners (SS)	2	1	3
13	To learn leadership (SS)	2	0	2
14	To solve the problem (problem solving) (PB)	2	0	2
15	To learn Javanese language (SS)	0	2	2
16	To know more about Indonesia (SS)	0	2	2

Note. PS=Personal Skill, SS=Social Skill, AS=Academic Skill, PB=Getting Personal Benefits

The students knew that they would be there in the village to help the villagers (Table 1 - number 4). It is also interesting to note that the number of students expecting to apply the theory learned (academic skills) at university was small. International students were more aware in this area compared to Indonesian students. It was hard to categorize precisely the expectation 'to gain new experience in COP' into a category, that is, either personal benefit or personal skill. However, it was decided to categorize it in group of personal benefit.

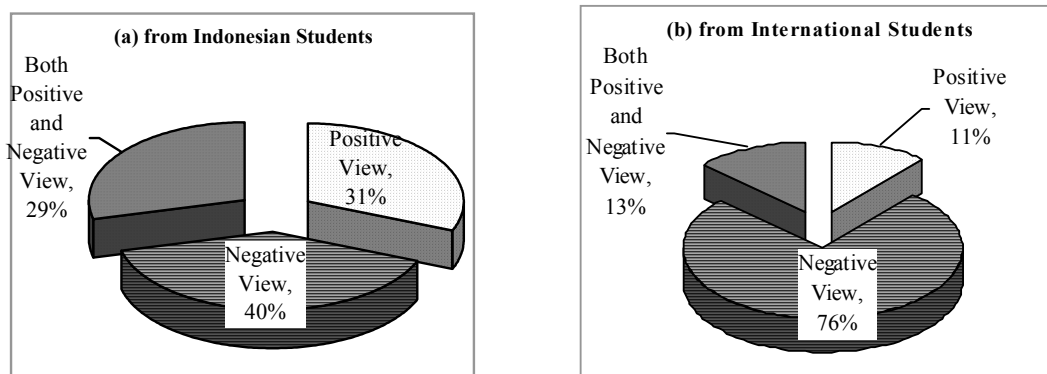
Students wrote descriptions about the village as positive and negative as shown in Figure 2. Their views on the villagers are all positive, i.e., they are kind and friendly people and live a simple life. However, many students both Indonesian and overseas viewed negatively the village infrastructure and facilities (no clean water, houses are dirty, no proper toilet). From these data we understand that the students both Indonesian and international had prepared themselves for the conditions in the village which may be worse than any they have experienced before, as many of them come from big cities and developed countries.

There were many ways students could have negative views about a village in Indonesia. Besides from the media, one most probable source was the COP alumni who had an opportunity to share their experiences from previous COP in the preparatory program with new COP participants in their university prior to departure. In the case of PCU students, they were taught on a Socio-Cultural course which introduced the village life and culture. They also knew the village situation when they went for a survey. Later we can compare the changes in their view by looking at the same data in the mid- and end program.

Some answers were grouped as both positive and negative, such as hot weather and villagers living a simple life. Unless they are further explained, we leave those data in those groups.

Figure 2

The Views of Students about the Village They Were Going to Stay During COP (Anggono, et al., 2009)

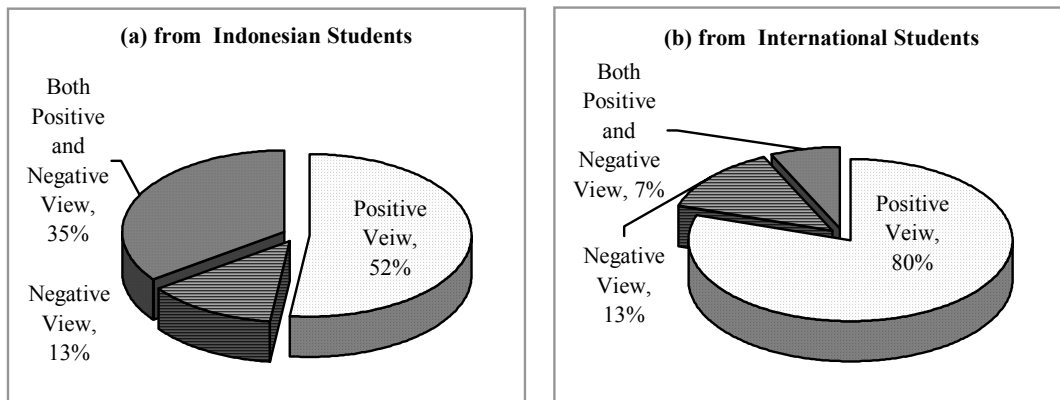


There were seven reflection questions answered by students at the mid period of COP. The questions asked about the village (its life and its villagers), the culture of both villagers and the other participants, and also on communication and teamwork.

Comparing Figure 2 with Figure 3, it is obvious that there is a significant drop in the frequencies of the negative views from pre-program to the mid-program after the first two weeks. In other words, the negative views have been replaced with positive ones after the students have experienced the village life themselves. Another interesting finding was that there were many positive views from the students about the culture of the villagers/community. They noticed some positive characteristics of the villagers such as being respectful to others, being polite, greeting people, being relaxed, and having good relationships. Prior to COP, students have already had positive descriptions about villagers and they confirm their descriptions when they met and interacted with them. There were only a small number of answers expressing a negative view about the community's culture: about the irregular meal time, unhealthy life, and working slowly. It is interesting to note that views on Moslem influence in the community and their way of living were only given by overseas students (Hong Kong and South Korea) and not by Indonesian students as living with Moslems as the majority in Indonesia is common for them.

Figure 3

The Views of Students about the Village Life and the Villagers after the First Two Weeks in the Village (Anggono, et al., 2009)



Cultural differences exist in the way individuals define themselves (Johnson & Johnson, 2002). That is, how students observed the culture of the villagers and the individuals in their group differed. The students' answers on what they learned from other participants' culture will lead us to understand what they have learned from others' culture. We observe that the students start to recognize a cultural identity of their group mates who are of a different nationality. The Asian students (Indonesian, Hong Kong, and South Korea) have observed that their Dutch friends speak very straightforward and individualistic. According to Hofstede (1980), "the most fiercely independent people live in the Netherlands." Others

mentioned that the Asians take more time for making a decision compared to the Europeans and are also more quiet. However, the latter could be caused by the language barrier rather than a general stereotype of Asians. To Indonesian students, Koreans are hard working, respectful to older people, and have many rules.

It was mentioned earlier that the first week in the village is an important stage for every student as they start to learn to adapt to their new environment, new people in the group and also the villagers who do not understand English. The students, particularly the overseas students, will start to explore the best way to communicate particularly with the villagers. Knowing they would find difficulties in communication therefore some questions were asked in that respect: how would they communicate with the villagers and if there were any difficulties faced in communicating with the villagers and other participants. The answers to these questions are shown in Table 2 and Table 3 which show the proportion for each answer.

Table 2 shows that there were 19 Indonesian students (in total 47% of the answers—numbers 1 and 5) who did not have difficulties in communication with the villagers. Some (numbers 2, 3, 6, 9, 10) said they had difficulties because they could

Table 2

Students' Answers about Difficulties in Communicating with the Villagers (Anggono, et al., 2009)

Number	Answer	Total Percentage
1	Not at all	42
2	Yes, it's difficult to use Javanese language but the villagers understand Bahasa Indonesia	11
3	Yes, because the villagers use only Javanese language	8
4	Yes, it's difficult to speak Javanese language	7
5	No, because the villagers can understand Bahasa Indonesia	5
6	Yes, the villagers didn't understand what we say	5
7	Yes, some problems in communication but it's OK, spend a lot of time	5
8	Yes, the language is different; the host parents can't speak English	5
9	It's a problem because the villagers have different expectation about the project	2
10	Yes, we cannot speak polite Javanese language	2
11	It's not enough using body language	2
12	There are mistakes in translation	2
13	No, because Indonesian students help in translation	2
14	Sometimes do not know the topics for conversation	2

not speak Javanese, which is the local language in the village. International students had the same difficulties in communicating with villagers due to the language barrier (numbers 7, 11, 12). In communication with other participants, a lot of students (5 overseas and 9 Indonesian students) expressed their difficulties in speaking English (33% of the answers—number 2 in Table 3). Indonesian students said they found it difficult to speak or share their ideas (number 1 which formed 37% of the answers). Although they did not mention the reason, the most probable reason was lack of fluency in English. Some students, both from Indonesia and overseas, mentioned that they did not have problem in communication (number 3—16% of the answers).

Students faced more difficulties in communicating with other participants rather than with the villagers. There were 82% answers (numbers 1-2, 4-6—in Table 3) mentioned the difficulties in communicating with other participants and there were only 35% answers commented to have difficulties in communicating with the villagers (numbers 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14—in Table 2).

Table 3

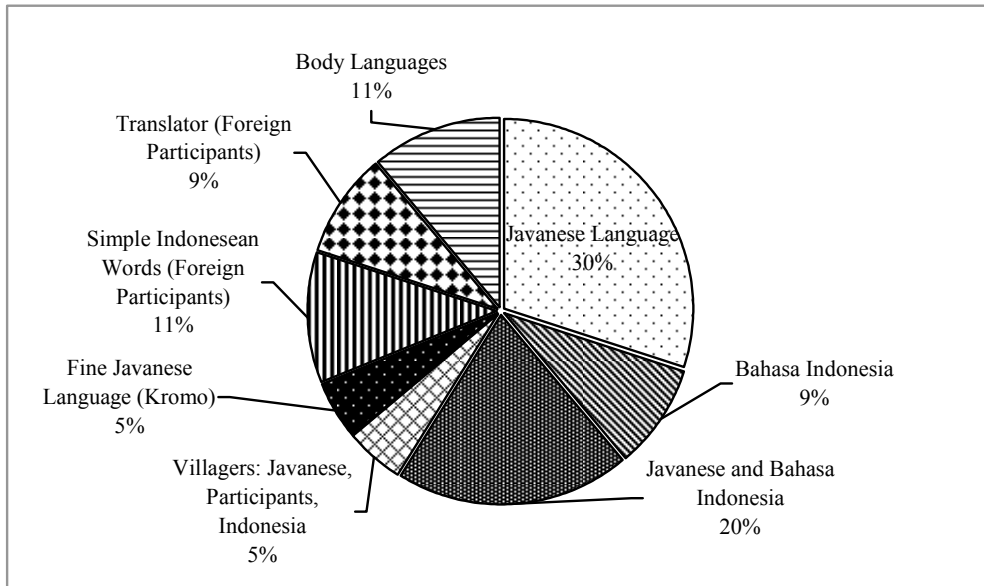
Students' Answers about Difficulties in Communicating with the Other Participants (Anggono, et al., 2009)

Number	Answer	Total Percentage
1	Yes. It's difficult to say opinion or idea and to share	37
2	Having problem in speaking English, different languages	33
3	There is no problem in communication	16
4	There were little problems, we use body language	5
5	Yes, the Dutch dominates the communication, feeling not comfortable	5
6	Yes, it's difficult to work together	2
7	It's simple to explain about the project	2

Figure 4 shows the way of communication used by the students to communicate with the villagers. The chart shows that Indonesian students mainly used Javanese language, some used Bahasa Indonesia or in combination with Javanese. After two weeks in the village, the overseas students also learned some Indonesian words and phrases which then they used in communication with the villagers. With the help of Indonesian students who were acting as interpreters, the overseas students were able to communicate with the villagers. Eleven% of the answers mentioned the benefit of using body language to communicate.

Figure 4

Several Ways of Communication Used by the Students to Communicate with the Villagers
(Anggono, et al., 2009)



Students were asked three ‘general’ questions at the end of COP to reflect on whether they have accomplished their goal or not in COP, the relation of COP and the course concept, and also about the highlight of their experience. To the first question, the answers that the students gave are very positive: as many as 75% said they had accomplished their goal and 8% had accomplished most of their goal. There was 13% who did not give an answer (Figure 5).

Conclusion

Most students (78% of the answers) expected to develop their social skills by joining COP. The students’ views about the village changed over time during COP; the negative views about the village decreased from 55% prior to COP to 10% in the mid COP. The negative views students had were about the village infrastructure and facilities like clean water, proper toilet, and cleanliness. Students faced more difficulties in communicating with fellow students of different nationalities (88% answers) rather than with the villagers (35% answers). Using body language and speaking slowly and clearly were the ways students used to help them communicate.

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