

# ***Service-Learning and Social Interventions***

lessons learned from introducing S-L course to the first-year social work students during the corona pandemic

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# S-L in social work

- ▶ field education is and always was an important part of social work education (Bogo, 2020)
- ▶ moving towards the competency-based model requires more emphasis on reflection and critical thinking to maximize learning outcomes (McGuire & Lay, 2019)
- ▶ an elective course “*Service-Learning and Social Interventions*” was developed to enhance the development of generic competencies of first-year social work students and to empower and encourage them for a more active engagement in the community

# About the S-L course

- ▶ **WHEN?** summer semester of academic year 2020./2021.
- ▶ **WHO?** 27 first-year social work students + 2 teachers + 4 mentors/civic partners
- ▶ **WHERE?** online and partially face-to-face in the community
- ▶ **WHAT?** development of 5 S-L projects indicated as relevant by the community partners
- ▶ **HOW?** teamwork, minimum 25 hours of service, ongoing reflection and critical thinking

# Research questions:

1. What benefits from participating in S-L projects do the participants of the S-L course recognize upon completion of their experience?
2. How do the course participants assess their satisfaction with the various elements of S-L at the end of their experience?
3. What changes do participants propose to improve the S-L course?

## METHOD:

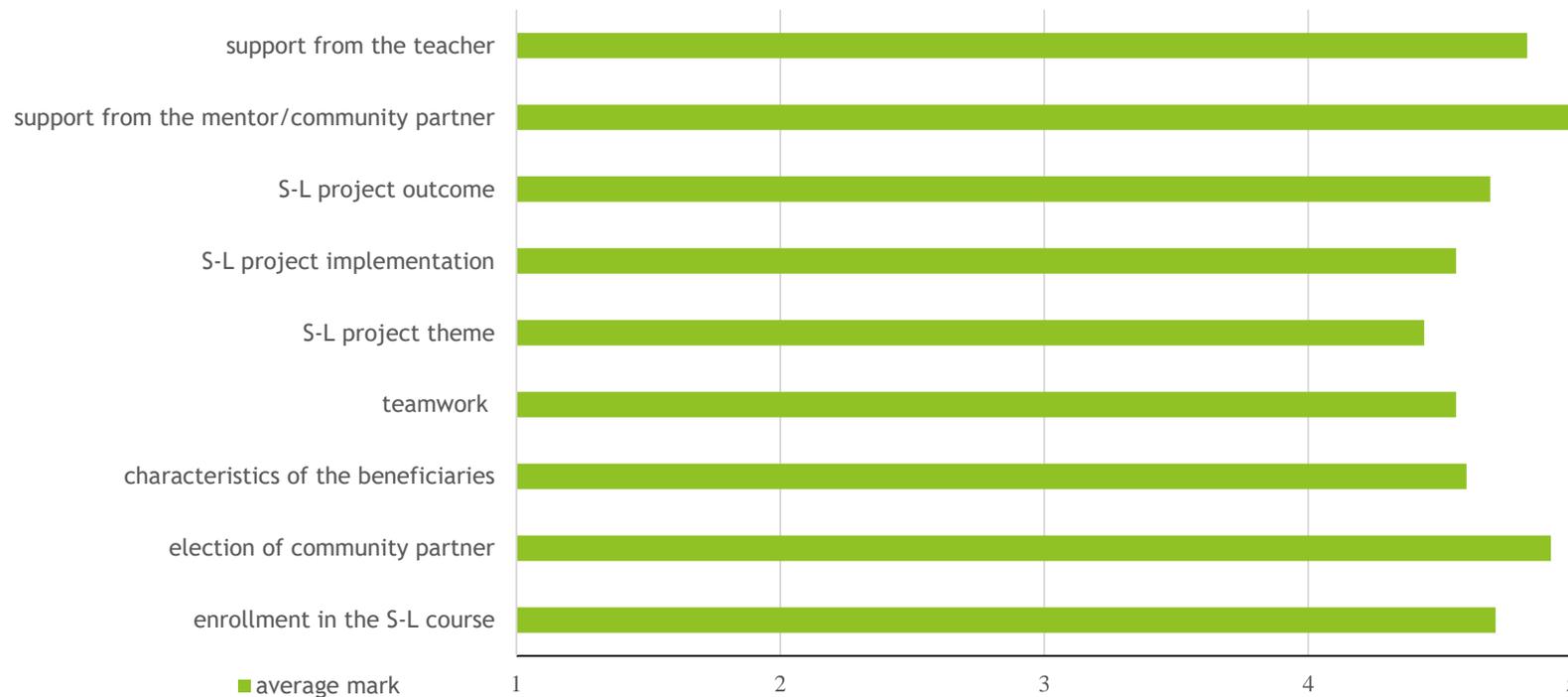
- ▶ questionnaire administrated at the end of the semester
- ▶  $N = 23$  students anonymously provided answers to 13 questions
- ▶ qualitative and quantitative analysis

# Results

1. qualitative analysis revealed several themes regarding **GAINS** from participating in the S-L project:
  - ▶ *personal gains* (sensitization for the needs of others, facing new challenges, becoming aware of own's potential, familiarizing with the profession)
  - ▶ *improving knowledge and skills* (teamwork, project management, acquiring new knowledge)
  - ▶ *gains for beneficiaries* (direct forms of help)
  - ▶ *gains for community partner* (investing time and knowledge to address the needs of the community partner)
  - ▶ *gains for broader community* (possibility of influence on the civic level, contribution to volunteering and engagement in community)

# Results

2. quantitative analysis revealed high levels of students' **SATISFACTION** related to different elements of the S-L course (*with elaborations indicating S-L experience contributed significantly to a better understanding of social work practices*):



# Results

3. qualitative analysis revealed that though many students stated that changes were not necessary, that they liked the course very much and found it extremely useful, some proposed **MODIFICATIONS** related to:
  - *the way of teaching* (organisation of the classes and field education),
  - *project implementation* (preparation and timing)
  - *monitoring* (different ways of monitoring student progress during a project)

# Conclusion

- ▶ some specific issues raised were related to the hybrid model of the S-L course (introduced due to the corona pandemic)
- ▶ current findings will be used to consider possible modifications of the course methods making it even more useful and user-friendly
- ▶ more extensive research on the effectiveness of service-learning in social work education in Croatia is needed to contribute to national and international evidence-based practices in S-L within this area