Simulated Problem-Based Learning: Teaching International Law in Exciting Way

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Cover Page Footnote

TEACHING INTERNATIONAL LAW USING SIMULATED PROBLEM-BASED METHOD (SPBL)

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Abstract

This research aimed to discuss the methods for teaching International Law to non-law students. The subject was offered to second and third-year students of the International Affairs Management program at the School of International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia. Since the subject required higher-order thinking skills, it was introduced with Simulated Problem-Based Learning (SPBL), which combines role-playing simulation and problem-based learning (PBL). In western universities, simulations, PBL, and role-playing were popular methods in teaching International Law and International Relations. The methods were shown to improve learning skills but were rarely used in teaching International Law in International Relations programs in Malaysia. Therefore, this study aimed to discuss the application of SPBL in teaching and learning and discuss students' perception of its implementation. The study used data from the student's reflective essays. The results showed that this method could help students improve their knowledge and nurture soft communication, confidence, and negotiation skills. Moreover, the students' prior knowledge class size, duration, and design were vital for the simulations to run smoothly. The SPBL was integral into the International Affairs curriculum because it dealt with current world issues. Therefore, it could be implemented in other courses of the program, though it must be carefully designed and suited to the learning outcomes.

Keywords: *Simulated Problem Based Learning, role-playing simulation, problem-based learning (PBL), international law, international relations*

I. INTRODUCTION

This research aimed to introduce a simulated problem-based learning method to teaching International Law at the School of International Studies, Universiti Utara Malaysia, Malaysia. The university runs the International Affairs program to produce graduates with leadership qualities capable of applying problem-solving in current world affairs. Therefore, students must propose solutions to complex issues based on International Law frameworks because this course requires problem-solving skills. The traditional teaching method known as the teacher-centred learning cannot nurture this skill because it limits knowledge discovery. The traditional method feeds students with the notes and topics to study for final examinations. According to Nazir

et al., students are less engaged and hardly pay attention during a lecture session.[1] This means the traditional method decreases the interest in understanding the subject[2]. Moreover, students are forced learn the murky, blurry, fuzzy international legal system and world politics.[3] .[4] This decreases the interest in understanding the subject students.[5]

International law students need to understand the "murky, blurry, fuzzy" international legal system and politics.[6] They should explore various sources, principles, settlement mechanisms, and precedent cases, which cannot be attained only by depending on the lecture's notes.[7] Therefore, traditional teaching is ineffective in nurturing higher-order thinking skills.

Shifting from traditional teaching to student-centred learning (SCL) is necessary to improve students learning experiences. According to Lee & Hannafin, students assume autonomy and responsibility for their learning in the SCL approach. They process, interpret, and refine meaning and understanding based on individual experiences.[8] The SCL requires students to construct their knowledge through exploration and analysis rather than processing specified content from directed instructions in traditional learning. Furthermore, this method changes the role of lecturers from teacher to instructor or facilitator. SCL methods include case study, role-playing, game simulation, project-based learning, problem-based learning (PBL), reflective writing, portfolio, and peer mentoring. This research aimed to introduce Simulated Problem-Based Learning (SPBL) as an SCL teaching method. The research defined

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[1] Mohd Nazir et al., "Teaching Business in Malaysia and the Use of PBL to Nurture Students' Critical Thinking: A Case Study of Sultan Idris Education University," *Geografia - Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 12, no. 6 (2016), 2.

[2] Shiamala Devi Ramaya et al., "Immersive Learning through Role Playing in Biology Education for Promoting Sustainability," in *Inspiring Innovations for Sustainable Futures: Proceeding of the International University Carnival on E-Learning (IUCEL)*, ed. Chen Chwen Jen (Kota Samarahan: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 2019), 63.

[3] Kurt W. Jefferson, "The Bosnian War Crimes Trial Simulation: Teaching Students about the Fuzziness of World Politics and International Law," *PS - Political Science and Politics* 32, no. 3 (1999), 590.

[4] Mohd Nazir et al., "Teaching Business in Malaysia and the Use of PBL to Nurture Students' Critical Thinking: A Case Study of Sultan Idris Education University," *Geografia - Malaysian Journal of Society and Space* 12, no. 6 (2016), 2.

[5] Shiamala Devi Ramaya et al., "Immersive Learning through Role Playing in Biology Education for Promoting Sustainability," in *Inspiring Innovations for Sustainable Futures: Proceeding of the International University Carnival on E-Learning (IUCEL)*, ed. Chen Chwen Jen (Kota Samarahan: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 2019), 63.

[6] Kurt W. Jefferson, "The Bosnian War Crimes Trial Simulation: Teaching Students about the Fuzziness of World Politics and International Law," *PS - Political Science and Politics* 32, no. 3 (1999), 590.

[7] Thomas Ambrosio, "Trying Saddam Hussein: Teaching International Law through an Undergraduate Mock Trial," International Studies Perspectives, 7.2006.165.

[8] Eunbae Lee and Michael J. Hannafin, "A Design Framework for Enhancing Engagement in Student-Centered Learning: Own It, Learn It, and Share It," *Educational Technology Research and Development* 64, no. 4 (August 1, 2016), 710.

the method and discussed how it increases the students' learning experience. Moreover, it explained the challenges in implementing the technique, and evaluated whether it could be applied to other subjects or courses besides International Law.

This research proposed SPBL as a teaching method and discussed students' learning experiences using data from their reflective essays. Twenty-three students have enrolled in the GFLA 3124 International Law in the academic year semester 2 of A182. This research also discussed the challenges in implementing SPBL and whether it could be applied to other subjects or courses.

II. WHAT IS SIMULATED PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING?

SPBL combines role-playing simulation and PBL as a student-centred instructional method that engages students in the learning process. Furthermore, is the most effective teaching method for students to apply, integrate, and retain information.[9] This shows that SPBL offers active engagements where students must discover knowledge through participation in cooperative groups to address specific problems. This section reviews the PBL and role-playing in which the SPBL combines both methods.

A. PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING (PBL)

PBL is centred on a problem, query, or puzzle that students wish to solve.'[10] It follows the constructivist rationale that knowledge should be constructed, not transferred passively by the lecturers to students. Furthermore, students participate in constructing knowledge.[11] PBL is an innovative teaching method developed by medical schools at Case Western Reserve University in the United States in the 1950s and McMaster University in Canada in the 1960s.[12] It is now transcended into a different area of research and field.[13]

In Malaysia, PBL was first introduced in health science in the 1970s. Moreover, more medical and non-medical students were introduced to this

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[9] Charles C. Bonwell and James A. Eison, "Active Learning: Creating Excitement in the Classroom," 1991, www.active-learning-site.com.

[10] David Bould, *Problem-Based Learning in Education for the Professions* (Syney: Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australia, 1985), 20.

[11] Heidi Maurer, "Best Practices in Problem-Based Learning," in *Handbook on Teaching and Learning in Political Science and International Relations*, ed. John Ishiyama, William Miller, and Eszter Simon (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2015), 369.

[12] Mark Albanese and Susan Mitchell, "'Problem-Based Learning: A Review of Literature on Its Outcomes and Implementation Issues," *Academic Medicine* 68, no. 1 (1993), 53.

[13] Philip H Anderson and Leigh Lawton, "Simulation Exercises And Problem Based Learning : Is There a Fit ?," *Developments in Business Simulations and Experiential Learning* 31 (2004), 186.

approach in the 1990s.[14] It is becoming a promising teaching innovation in Malaysian higher education. However, this research found that using PBL in teaching International Relations is scarce. A search in the Scopus database by using the keywords "problem-based learning", "International Relations", and "Malaysia" found no PBL. Similar keywords were used to search in Google Scholar and found that only one proceeding paper was written, "Simulated Problem-Based Learning: Teaching International Law in an Exciting Way". This paper was presented at the Proceeding of the Inspirational Scholar Symposium (ISS) in Hatyai, Thailand, in 2019.[15] Therefore, using PBL in teaching International Relations or International Law in Malaysia is necessary to improve the teaching and learning quality.

Several research examined PBL implementation in teaching International Relations by western scholars. Burch discussed the implementation technique in International Relations by adopting Kolb's Cycle Learning which involves the problem, initial analysis, research, and reporting stages. This technique promotes students to identify problems and resources and create inquiries by posing questions. Students also determine the context of the analysis and research the materials for case analysis and report. According to Ala and Hyde-Clarke, PBL could be used as a teaching and learning tool for undergraduate students in the foundational course of International Relations. It was introduced in the simulative International Political Economy and Multilateral games. In this case, students are given scenarios to discuss the issues critically and propose solutions. [16] PBL requires students to solve problems, discover knowledge, apply, and explain. Therefore, it increases inclusivity in learning, deep understanding, interest, and skills needed for career development and employability potential.[17] According to World Economic Forum (WEF), problem-solving is one of the top ten skills needed in the 21st century.[18] Therefore, PBL could be an excellent teaching and learning tool when the course is well conceptualized and scaffolded. It could impart essential skills to

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[14] Mohamad Termizi Borhan, "Problem Based Learning (PBL) in Malaysian Higher Education: A Review of Research on Learners´ Experience and Issues of Implementations," *ASEAN Journal of Engeneering Education* 1, no. 1 (2012), 48.

[15] Nik Nor Suhaida Ali, "Simulated Problem-Based Learning: Teaching International Law in Exciting Way," in *Proceedings of the Inspirational Scholar Symposium (ISS)*, 2019, 197.

[16] Jacqui Ala and Nathalie Hyde-Clarke, "The Utility of Adopting Problem-Based Learning in an International Relations Foundation Course," *Education as Change* 10, no. 1 (2006), 128.

[17] S. Hale, "Politics and Real World: A Case Study in Developing Case-Based Learning," *European Political Science* 5, no. 1 (2006); Kurt Burch, "A Primer on Problem-Based Learning for International Relations Courses," *International Studies Perspectives* 1, no. 1 (2000), 34.

[18] Alex Gray, "The 10 Skills You Need to Thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution," World Economic Forum, 2016, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2016/01/the-10-skills-you-need-to-thrive-in-the-fourth-industrial-revolution/.

undergraduate students.[19] The method effectively allows students to develop higher-order skills and grasp complex academic content. These include critical thinking and problem-solving in International Relations for International Law.

Bijmans and Versluis highlighted the importance of constant training of teaching staff in PBL, where lecturers need to ensure the assignment fits the tasks. Furthermore, lecturers and students should understand that PBL helps develop the skill to deal with complex issues rather than knowledge.[20] In this context, it helps students develop higher-order thinking skills to deal with complex international and regional issues. This means that constant professional training is needed for the PBL method. Therefore, the interest of teaching staff in employing and adopting this method also matters.

B. ROLE-PLAYING SIMULATION

The SPBL method incorporates role-playing simulation where students take a role and participate in the learning process. According to Schaap, it promotes deep-holistic learning, in which students must interact and collaborate to complete the task.[21] Furthermore, students learn through active participation, engagement, and experience in a constructive environment. Additionally, students need to deliver speeches and involve in negotiations and resolutions to address reality-based problems.

Previous research highlighted the importance of role-playing simulation in teaching International Relations and International Law. According to Asal, role-playing simulation significantly impacts learning experiences. It helps make complex theories clearer and contributes to knowledge construction. This also promotes students to take the initiative to participate in role-playing.[22] Furthermore, Shellman and Turan demonstrated that role-playing simulation helps improve speaking capacity and develop critical positions. Students also enhance knowledge of theory and concepts as well as increase interest in the discipline. Therefore, the method offers a memorable experience by creating an environment where course content is applied to achieve simulation goals.[23]

Role-playing is a popular method of teaching in International Relations, and various forms have been designed over the decades since its introduction in

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[19] Ala and Hyde-Clarke, "The Utility of Adopting Problem-Based Learning in an International Relations Foundation Course," 129.
[20] Patrick Bijsmans and Esther Versluis, "Problem-Based Learning and the Relevance of Teaching and Learning European Studies in Times of Crises," *European Political Science* 19, no. 4 (2020), 670.
[21] Andrew Schaap, "Learning Political Theory by Role Playing," *Politics* 25, no. 1 (February 2005), 48.
[22] Victor Asal, Justin Conrad, and Steve Sin, "Back to the Future: Teaching about the End of the World," *European Political Science*, July 16, 2019, 1–17.
[23] Stephen M. Shellman and Kürşad Turan, "Do Simulations Enhance Student Learning? An Empirical Evaluation of an IR Simulation," *Journal of Political Science Education* 2, no. 1 (2006), 19.

the 1950s. It could vary in focus, interest, conflict studies, trade, and decision-making. Moreover, role-playing simulation addresses environmental problems or humanitarian crises. It could be based on decision-making bodies such as the United Nations, European Union, ASEAN, Gulf Cooperation Council, OPEC, and other intergovernmental organizations. For instance, Model United Nations is a popular role-playing simulation adopted in and out of the classroom. It was demonstrated in previous research as an educational tool to create a constructive learning environment.[24] Furthermore, recent research adopted Model ASEAN Meeting, where students participated as ASEAN state leaders. [25] Kirshner adopted negotiation simulations in negotiating protracted conflicts such as the Arab-Israeli conflict. Also, the simulation could be adapted to other protracted conflicts, such as the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, the "Troubles" in Northern Ireland, or the Colombian civil war.[26] Regarding International Law, Jefferson introduced the Bosnian war crime trial simulations to teach students about the fuzziness of world politics and international law.[27] Ambrosio designed a mock war trial of the former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussin's trials. There are three educational purposes of mock trials. First, they transform teaching from traditional to interactive, aiming for a deep understanding of the material covered in the International Law class. Second, mock trials provide hands-on experience in interpreting and applying international law. Third, mock trials keep students engaged and interested in a real-world case.[28] For instance, Kille used role-playing simulation to create a new international human rights treaty.[29] This means that lecturers must be clear on the educational purpose of designing or adopting role-playing simulation model. It should fit with the learning outcomes and contents of the course.

SPBL combines PBL and role-playing simulation methods and engages students as active participants. Students explore the real-world problem

[24] Sean P. Giovanello, Jason A. Kirk, and Mileah K. Kromer, "Student Perceptions of a Role-Playing Simulation in an Introductory International Relations Course," *Journal of Political Science Education* 9, no. 2 (2013): 197–208; S. Obendorf and C. Randerson, "Evaluating the Model United Nations: Diplomatic Simulation as Assessed Undergraduate Coursework," *European Political Science* 12, no. 3 (2013): 350–64; Susan Engel, Josh Pallas, and Sarah Lambert, "Model United Nations and Deep Learning: Theoretical and Professional Learning," *Journal of Political Science Education* 13, no. 2 (2017): 171–84; Daniel Mcintosh, "The Uses and Limits of the Model United Nations in an International Relations Classroom," 2003; James P. Muldoon, "The Model United Nations Revisited," *Simulation and Gaming* 26, no. 1 (1995): 27–35.
[25] Mario Alberto de la Puente Pacheco et al., "Effectiveness of Model ASEAN Meeting in Enhancing Critical Thinking: A Colombia Case Study," *Interactive Learning Environments*, 2022, 623.
[26] Shanna A. Kirschner, "Simulating Negotiation in Protracted Conflicts," *Journal of Political Science Education* 16, no. 4 (October 1, 2020), 433.
[27] Jefferson, "The Bosnian War Crimes Trial Simulation: Teaching Students about the Fuzziness of World Politics and International Law, " 589.
[28] Ambrosio, "Trying Saddam Hussein: Teaching International Law through an Undergraduate Mock Trial," 162.
[29] Kent J. Kille, "Simulating the Creation of a New International Human Rights Treaty: Active Learning in the International Studies Classroom," *International Studies Perspectives* 3, no. 3 (2002), 271.

scenario and scaffold their knowledge through the PBL method, as explained in the following section.

III. SIMULATED PROBLEM-BASED LEARNING IN TEACHING INTERNATIONAL LAW

This section elaborates on designing simulated problem-based learning in teaching International Law using a modified PBL seven-step model.

Figure 1: Modified PBL Seven-Steps Model of Maastricht University [30]
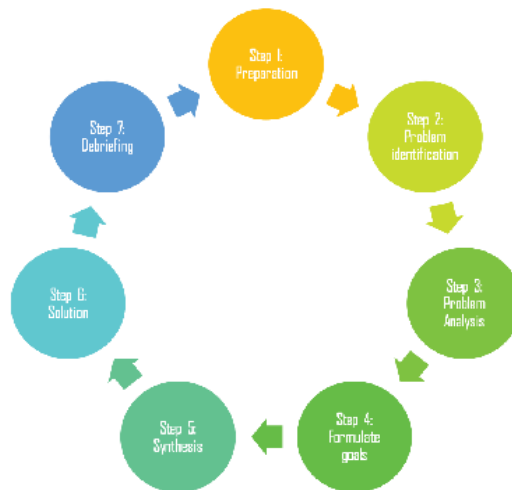
Step 1: Preparation. In this stage, lecturers should set the learning outcomes, where students must 1) identify issues and problems of a given case, 2) apply knowledge of International Law, including its principles and precedents, 3) produce oral and written arguments relating to International Law, and 4) propose a solution using the framework of International Law. Students are divided into small groups by lecturers based on assigned countries. Lecturers also act as state delegations, ranging from high-level state officials

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[30] https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/education/why-um/problem-based-learning#7jump

such as President, Prime Minister, ministers, and ambassadors, to low-level state officials such as diplomats. Students are also briefed about the rules and procedures of simulations.

Step 2: Problem Identification. Students should identify the problems and issues in a position paper. In a position research paper, students must identify state's goals and interests, address the stance and priority, review the international law adoption, and propose a solution. In the position paper, students are asked to conduct their research materials independently. It is the initial step in preparing simulation meetings and problem identification in the PBL method.

Students are involved in-class simulation by taking the role of the state delegation. In-class simulations, lecturers adapt existing role-play simulation platforms, such as Model United Nations, Model ASEAN Meeting, and Gulf Cooperation Council, or create simulations. This research adopted the ASEAN Model Meeting, where students must deal with the South China Sea problems. In previous simulations, the Human Rights Council meeting was adopted to address extra-judicial killings. Students were assigned according to the councils' member countries. For the Model ASEAN Meeting, they were assigned based on ASEAN memberships and partners, such as China and the United States.

The simulation begins with delegation addressing their state position in the plenary session's opening speech. The speech is delivered by the head of the delegation, such as the president or prime minister. The delegation state a position, addresses the issue related to their country, makes arguments, and proposes solutions. Furthermore, students may encounter various ideas, positions, and arguments from the country's delegation.

Step 3: Problem Analysis. Each state's position is discussed in the meetings, and the delegation analyzes the issues presented. At this point, the delegation discusses factual information and formulates possible explanations. It makes a short contribution before critically examining ideas in the brainstorming meetings.

Step 4: Formulate goals. After the brainstorming meetings, delegations reach a consensus and prioritize the problems to be addressed.

Step 5: Synthesis. In the meetings, delegations critically review the mechanism of settlements, conventions, principles, precedent cases, and judgment. They work independently or form alliances to formulate and draft a new settlement. Each delegation sponsors the draft and presents its resolutions for debating and negotiation.

Step 6: Solution. Once the final resolution is adopted, the session convenes with the evaluation process. Each component in the final resolution is discussed to reach a joint agreement. This research adopted the ASEAN Model Meeting simulation. Therefore, the concept of the ASEAN way was adopted, where a final resolution is reached by mutual consensus before the meetings end in a two-day conference.

Step 7: Debriefing. Debriefing allows students to discuss individual learning experiences, where lecturers review the SBPL process orally or in writing. In this research's class, students were asked to write a reflective essay, which gives them more time and opportunity to reflect and analyze experiences privately. The three reflective questions asked to include:

How is your learning experience?

Does the SPBL improve your learning skills?

Is SPBL suitable to be adopted as a teaching method in International Law classes? What is your suggestion to improve it?

IV. STUDENT'S LEARNING EXPERIENCE AND CONCERNS

This research discussed the ability of SPBL to increase learning experience and skills and examined its implementation as a teaching method for International Law. The analysis was based on reflective essays of 23 students enrolled in GFLA 3124 International Law in academic session semester 2 A182.

A. STUDENTS' LEARNING EXPERIENCE

The reflective essay analysis using ATLAS.TI showed that SPBL significantly increased learning experience, as shown in Table 1. Overall, SPBL increases learning experience, though only one respondent disagreed. Some students' reflections were related to their learning experiences.

Agree	96%
Disagree	4%

Table 1: Students' Learning Experience

"SPBL has taught me to be more confident in communicating with others. It also taught me to be serious when dealing with a problem because I need to find additional notes. It teaches me to be independent when searching the information and to be more cooperative with my partner in solving the issue".[31]

"I have learned that the South China Sea dispute is not a small problem and applies many principles and terms. During the simulation, I have learned state responsibility and how they exert jurisdiction on their behalf. I have learned about EEZ, how it works, and how International Law plays in the international frame. It is a big connection. When I participated in the conference, I learned the claimants were moving the dice. This conference model has given me a strong basic knowledge about the South China Sea."[32]

"The International Law course offers a unique opportunity for undergraduate students to engage in classroom debate or have a mock conference on crucial topics such as the disputes in the South China Sea. Students had a chance to express their viewpoints."[33]

"From the SPBL, I know how to apply what I have learned in the International Law syllabus in dealing with the issue of the South China Sea. The topic covered territorial disputes to dispute settlement mechanisms."[34]

"I have learned much during the SPBL activity. The simulation opened my eyes to negotiation and finding a resolution, which is hard to achieve. It clears the doubt of why a resolution is hard to achieve due to personal agendas for each country. Each claimant countries have its interest in protecting. The major aspect I learned is the council process, which I had not experienced before this class. This knowledge is important to us as International Affairs students."[35]

"I think the simulation does not help much to improve my problem-solving ability. However, it indicates the proper way and peaceful problem-solving mechanism."[36]

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[31] Student 1. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[32] Student 2. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[33] Student 3. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[34] Student 4. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[35] Student 5. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[36] Student 6. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

The reflective essays helped analyze problem-solving skills based on the score given by lecturers using the problem-solving rubric. The analysis showed that 56% and 44% of students showed moderate and high-level problem-solving skills. The results are shown in Table 2.

Category	Numbers of groups	Percentage
High	4	44%
Moderate	5	56%
Low	0	0%

Table 2: Problem Solving Assessment

The result showed more moderate than high-level problem-solving skills. However, this does not mean that SPBL has not increased learning experience. One student stated,

"Simulation did require us to solve problems precisely. One should think critically to find a better solution to cope with the current topics. Besides adequate knowledge, skills also matter. Solving problems needs certain to convince the other parties. One of the ways to practice our skills in problem-solving is stimulation."[37]

B. LEARNING SKILLS

The learning skills were analyzed using qualitative software called ATLAS. TI, which codifies data into thematic themes. Based on reflective essays, this research identified four primary learning skills, including knowledge, negotiation, confidence, and communication. Other skills are teamwork, self-reflection, active listening and research skills, as illustrated in Figure 2.

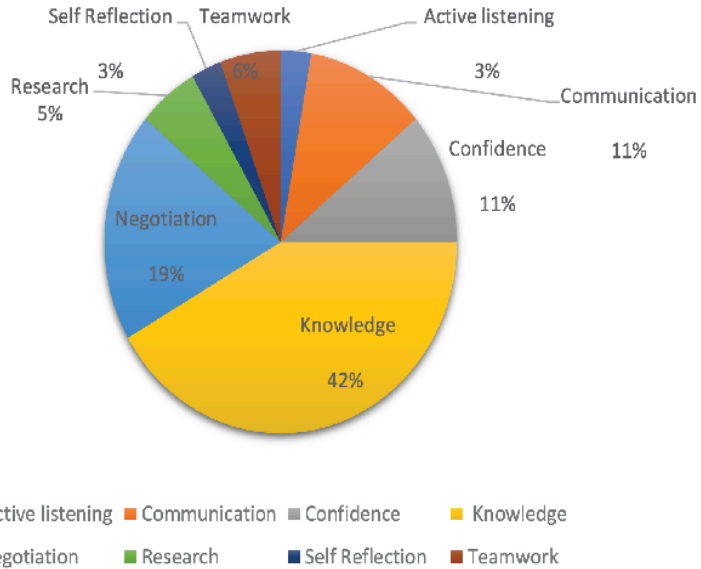[37] Student 8. Reflective Essay.29 July 2019.

Figure 2: Students Learning Skills

First, SPBL facilitated deep learning by helping students acquire new knowledge. Deep learning comprises outcomes that include mastery of essential academic content and empowerment through self-directed learning. Furthermore, it correlates with existing simulation and deep learning research in international relations[38].

> *"It is hands-on experience in resolving disputes, drafting, and debating resolutions based on International Law."[39]*

> *"The introduction of simulation exposes us to the real-time case. It enhances our knowledge of developing the real dispute happening worldwide. We could roughly determine the ways states use to prove their position. It includes historical claims and is attached to geographical factors to make the statement more persuasive. Simulation is also a process in United*

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[38] Engel, Pallas, and Lambert, "Model United Nations and Deep Learning: Theoretical and Professional Learning"; Katy A. Crossley-Frolick, "Beyond Model UN: Simulating Multi-Level, Multi-Actor Diplomacy Using the Millennium Development Goals," *International Studies Perspectives*, 2010; Michael Toomey, Xinhe Zhou, and Xin Yan, "Examining the Effectiveness of Using Role-Play Simulations with Chinese Students in China," *International Studies Perspectives* 21, no. 4 (October 27, 2020), 364.

[39] Student 7. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

Nations learned, specifically in the combination of solutions."[40]

"We understand how important to apply this law and how to make a treaty or agreement stipulated in the Vienna Convention as our reference. As a result, we come out with the best final resolution."[41]

"I learned many new terms in International Law."[42]

"The South China Sea is one of the longest and most complex disputes in contemporary international affairs. It remains one of the few flashpoints worldwide with the potential to be a big power conflict. Understanding this problem is an important task for IR students. Through this SPBL, I learn more about the conflict and problems between countries. We feel responsible for the problem and want to protect our country's rights."

Second, students stated that they learned negotiation skills. This research confirmed the existing literature on improving negotiation skills.[43]

"I learned how to negotiate with the disputant parties properly."[44]

"I have been appointed as a chairman. Therefore, I have learned the persuasion skill, which is important to persuade both countries' representatives to compromise and engage them in negotiation."[45]

"I have acquired coercion skills to persuade other nations in a negotiation process."[46]

"I also learned that the negotiation over the dispute conflicts would take a long time to lead to the conclusion."[47]

"Negotiating in solving problems is easy as we discuss what we agree or disagree about something until we get the final decision."[48]

Third, SPBL helps improve communication skills. Furthermore, this

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[40] Student 8. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[41] Student 9. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[42] Student 10. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[43] Crossley-Frolick, "Beyond Model UN: Simulating Multi-Level, Multi-Actor Diplomacy Using the Millennium Development Goals"; Engel, Pallas, and Lambert, "Model United Nations and Deep Learning: Theoretical and Professional Learning."
[44] Student 9. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[45] Student 12. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[46] Student 8. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[47] Student 11. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[48] Student 13. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

research confirmed the existing literature that simulations help students develop communication skills[49].

> "*SPBL improved my communication skill.*"[50]

> "*I learned how to interact diplomatically by practising communication skills such as cooperation, social dynamics, and interactions. Also, I learned how to negotiate, debate, and reach a consensus on the motions raised by other delegates during the simulation.*"[51]

> "*I had learned ways to communicate with others in a formal situation.*"[52]

> "*From the SPBL, I learned how to negotiate, interact, and communicate with representatives from other parties. The stimulation must cover the international arena and our daily lives, including discussing how to solve certain issues. Moreover, it delivers lasting, quality solutions, rather than poor short-term solutions that do not satisfy the needs of either party.*"[53]

Fourth, students expressed that SPBL helps them gain confidence in communicating with others, standing and position, and expressing opinions.

> "*I learned to be more patient and gained self-confidence.*"[54]

> "*Simulation taught me to communicate more confidently with others.*"[55]

> "*I have also learned that standing strong on what the states held is a way of prioritizing sovereignty among other states.*"[56]

> "*I obtained a new experience on how to become a prime minister. When I am involved in this, my first expression is that I cannot even talk, which I did not know in detail. However, I gained the confidence to talk about my state representative after the meeting.*"[57]

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[49] Willam A. Hazleton and Ronald P. Mahurin, "External Simulations as Teaching Devices: The Model United Nations," *Simulation and Games* 17, no. 2 (1986), 149; Muldoon, "The Model United Nations Revisited,"28; Jeffrey S Lantis, "Simulations and Experiential Learning in the International Relations Classroom.," *International Negotiation* 3, no. 1 (1998), 55.

[50] Student 16. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

[51] Student 17. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

[52] Student 16. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

[53] Student 4. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

[54] Student 1. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

[55] Student 7. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

[56] Student 9. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

[57] Student 10. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

C. PRACTICALITY OF IMPLEMENTING SPBL IN INTERNATIONAL LAW CLASS

SPBL is a suitable teaching method for International Law, as shown by the following feedback.

"SPBL is very suitable for students to develop their problem-solving and critical thinking."[58]

"SPBL is suitable for International Law class because it gives us a challenge and experience on solving the problem when I become a diplomat one day."[59]

"SPBL is suitable for International Law class. I suggest continuing this simulation because students represent their ideas. The simulation allows us to hone our skills in International Law subject."[60]

"SPBL is important for International Law class. The simulation must help students nurture their problem-solving skills, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, people management, ability to coordinate with others, as well as good judgment and decision-making skills."[61]

"SPBL is suitable for International Law class…the discussion cannot be ignored since it is a compulsory way to overcome international disputes. Besides, the simulation provides a platform for students to learn more knowledge about particular issues. In the simulation, we obtain more information from other sources, and how we collect information is also important for us to learn. I hope there will be more chances for me to participate in the simulation. It is a special way to understand and remember the theories and the particular issues."[62]

"SPBL is suitable for International Law class. Every case is interesting when examined further. It is my first-time experience that we have not experienced in other classes before. Previously, I was afraid of getting bored because this is the law, but the way Mdm. Nik's teaching style is not boring."[63]

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[58] Student 18. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[59] Student 21. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[60] Student 17. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[61] Student 10. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[62] Student 13. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[63] Student 20. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

> *"The simulation is suitable for International Law class because students are exposed to actual cases and engaged in the resolution-making process. It raises students' interest in finding additional knowledge to prepare for their debate. Furthermore, the simulation enhances our knowledge and skills in collecting and articulating data related to international law subjects. This activity also exposed new terms and concepts used to justify claims in International Law."[64]*

SPBL is a method that emphasizes learning by experience and active engagement. It has transformed teaching and learning from transmitting to constructing knowledge. Moreover, SPBL allows students to explore the learning process through scaffolded PBL and role-playing simulation. They apply the content learned in class and deepen understanding and knowledge about the selected issue. This method requires students to conduct extensive research to prepare for the simulation. Preparation helps gain confidence during the debate session in formal meetings. This problem has been addressed by students unable to actively participate in the debate due to inadequate preparation and knowledge. Therefore, they have learned the necessity to improve research skills and comprehension.

SPBL also stimulates interest in deepening knowledge of International Law. Students are motivated to learn more about the issue and grasp the essential aspects of the course. Therefore, the approach promotes meaningful deep learning and steers students to be passionate about the course. It also promotes holistic development in terms of skill acquisition. The approach helps nurture communication, critical thinking and problem-solving, negotiation and persuasion, diplomatic skills, and teamwork and promotes lifelong learning. These skills are essential for students to thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution era. They are listed by WEF among the top ten skills needed by 2020.[65]

D. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING SPBL

Implementing SPBL is challenging, though it has positive feedback from International Law students. Students have increased their understanding of International Law's concepts and theories and how to apply them to specific conflicts or crises. However, several challenges were faced during the role-playing simulation, impeding knowledge acquisition. Simulation assumes that students are able to utilize the skills acquired in the classroom and apply them in the new learning settings. Getting students to engage and participate in the

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[64] Student 15. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[65] Gray, "The 10 Skills You Need to Thrive in the Fourth Industrial Revolution."

simulation has become the main challenge. The ability to adapt to the new analytical skills and poor learning have affected learning experience and their overall classroom performances.

The issues encountered during the simulation would require further attention to enhance the exercise's effectiveness in the classroom. Another challenge is the application of theory into practice.[66] Students are expected to synthesize their arguments' existing mechanisms, principles, conventions, and precedents. However, there is no articulation when applying and using the mechanisms due to the limited time to understand and comprehend the subject. Students could understand and better synthesize arguments when lecturers started the simulation after the course.

Further attention is required to ensure that simulation is accessible to all students. It is also a big challenge for lecturers to gain all students to participate and engage in the simulation exercise. The results showed that variations in students' performance impact their confidence skills and isolates good ones from free riders. In line with this, Shat and Switky stated that only good learners dominate the simulation process. Some students may not be willing to participate or may lack the skills necessary to execute the role-playing activity. [67] Therefore, they are reluctant to share ideas and contribute less to the group because of the feeling of inhibition and fear of intelligibility. Students are not confident to share ideas because they are afraid to be judged by other group members and lecturers. They might experience speaking anxiety and fear of negative evaluation. The fear of making mistakes makes them worry about being laughed at and receiving negative appraisals from their peers, as expressed in the reflective essays.

> *"My mind went blank due to nervousness and incomplete judgment. I had somewhat experienced a lack of ample information regarding the issues, talking inappropriate words towards other parties."[68]*

> *"I lack the confidence to speak fluently during the meetings."[69]*

> *"My English is moderate. I found it difficult to communicate as my vocabulary is limited."[70]*

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[66] Joseph M. Brown, "Efficient, Adaptable Simulations: A Case Study of a Climate Negotiation Game," *Journal of Political Science Education* 14, no. 4 (October 2, 2018), 520.
[67] Carolyn M. Shaw and Bob Switky, "Designing and Using Simulations in the International Relations Classroom," *Journal of Political Science Education* 14, no. 4 (2018), 530.
[68] Student 9. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[69] Student 21. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.
[70] Student 22. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

Too small or large classrooms are ineffective in conducting simulation activities. Simulation or role-playing is better implemented in an environment involving 30 to 40 students.[71] When the class is too large, some students are left out of the simulations, making them disinterested. This is because they lack responsibilities or roles in the assigned task. Similarly, it is difficult for lecturers to design the simulations in too small classrooms. Lecturers must prepare a case scenario for a small classroom.

Incorporating simulation exercises in the active semester is another challenge lecturers face in implementing simulation in the classroom. However, there is limited class time to implement simulation exercises with students during the semester because lecturers must also complete the course syllabus.[72] The results showed that time management in implementing the SPBL is vital. Therefore, it ensures that lecturers and students have ample time to prepare and engage students meaningfully. One student stated, "I think we could lessen the number of meetings because they sway the objectives of the simulations and make our discussions irrelevant."[73]

V. CONCLUSION

SPBL is a method that offers a unique learning experience to students. With a role-playing simulation, students experience real situations by taking roles in constructing knowledge through the method. Their knowledge is scaffolded, contributing to developing higher-order thinking skills. Students are given room for creativity to utilize and apply the principles and laws on complex international issues. They develop high-order cognitive skills, such as knowledge acquisition, communication, negotiation, and confidence, which cannot be learned through the traditional learning method.

Lecturers play a crucial role in helping students become autonomous in their knowledge discovery, transmission, use, exposure to real situations, collaboration to find solutions. Since SPBL deals with international issues, it could be an integral part of the International Affairs curriculum and other courses. However, the implementation of role-playing simulation and PBL must be carefully designed and suited to the learning outcomes.

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[71] Brown, "Efficient, Adaptable Simulations: A Case Study of a Climate Negotiation Game,"515.
[72] Fung, 114.
[73] Student 23. Reflective Essay. 29 July 2019.

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