ENHANCING GRADUATE INSTRUCTION THROUGH THE ESSENCE PROCESS IN A PHILOSOPHY AND THEORY OF EDUCATION COURSE

Narong Kanchana*
narong.ka@skru.ac.th*

Songkhla Rajabhat University, Songkhla 90000 Thailand

Corresponding author E-mail: narong.ka@skru.ac.th*

Received: December 18, 2025 **Revised:** December 29, 2025 **Accepted:** December 30, 2025

Citation reference :
Kanchana, N. (2025). Enhancing graduate instruction through the essence process in philosophy and theory of education course. **International Journal of Industrial Education and Technology**, 7 (2), 138-153

ABSTRACT

This classroom action research addressed a persistent research gap concerning the limited availability of structured instructional processes that effectively translate philosophical and educational theory into practice at the graduate level by exploring the use of the ESSENCE instructional process—a seven-step framework designed to bridge theory and practice—in a graduate-level Philosophy and Theory of Education course. Instruction was delivered online over four consecutive weeks through synchronous sessions. The study aimed to (1) examine learning achievement following the intervention, (2) assess graduate students' ability to design an Integrated Learning Unit synthesizing philosophical and educational theories, contemplative education, experiential learning theory, participatory action research (CPAR), and the sufficiency economy philosophy, and (3) analyze the quality of students' reflective thinking regarding learning and self-change. Participants were 11 graduate students—all full-time university lecturers from non-education fields (4 doctoral, 7 master's). The ESSENCE-based intervention comprised four lesson plans. Research instruments included an achievement test (Cronbach's α = .86), a performance assessment rubric, and a reflective-journal protocol. Quantitative data were analyzed using mean and standard deviation; qualitative data were examined through content analysis. Results indicated gains in learning achievement, with mean scores increasing from 16.20 to 23.11 out of 34. Graduate students demonstrated the ability to translate theory into practice through integrated learning unit design products ($\bar{x}$ = 25.05 out of 30), reflecting creative synthesis of conceptual frameworks with instructional planning. Reflective-journal analysis revealed a shift from externally oriented practice toward internalized professional growth, including increased attention to deep listening and deliberate mental cultivation. Overall, the findings highlight the distinctive contribution of the ESSENCE process in supporting theory-in-action and transformative professional learning by integrating structured public reasoning, collaborative design, and reflective refinement in graduate instruction.

keywords: ESSENCE process, Graduate instruction, Philosophy and theory of education, Integrated learning unit, Reflective thinking

I. INTRODUCTION

Graduate education in philosophy of education is expected to cultivate the capacity to connect educational aims with action—engaging in public reasoning about purposes, followed by designing for learning and social value. However, within graduate-level philosophy and theory of education courses, instructional practices often remain predominantly concept-driven and discussion-oriented, offering limited structured support for translating philosophical and educational theories into coherent, practice-based instructional designs. This gap is particularly salient for graduate learners from non-education backgrounds, who may demonstrate strong conceptual understanding yet face challenges in integrating theory, instructional design, and reflective professional development in authentic learning contexts. Globally, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2024, pp. 7–9) reports that adult upskilling systems must respond to rapid transitions in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and green technologies while removing participation barriers such as time, cost, and low perceived need (e.g., "no need," "too busy," "too expensive"). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2023, pp. 15–16) cautions that technology is a means—not an end—and should be used only where it supports equitable, evidence-informed learning, with attention to costs and context. In Thailand, the National Economic and Social Development Council (NESDC, 2023, pp. 4–5) emphasizes a high-capability, lifelong-learning workforce as a national milestone for opportunity and justice in its 13th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2023–2027). Complementing this, the Office of the Education Council (OEC, 2023, pp. 220–221) reports sustained public commitment—about 14.7% of the FY2021 national budget and 2.9% of GDP—paired with multilateral partnerships for curriculum, teacher development, and equity. These signals frame the present study's focus on a structured theory-to-practice routine for graduate instruction.

A growing body of scholarship identifies structured routines that help learners move from "theory talk" to "theory-in-action." Recent research on formative assessment demonstrates that frequent, criterion-referenced feedback supports learning improvement over time by enabling learners to use feedback for instructional adjustment and self-regulation (Carney et al., 2022, pp. 1–3). Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) proposes a process logic—experience → reflection → conceptualization → experimentation—that guides inquiry toward application in higher education and adult learning contexts (Kolb, 2015, pp. xxiii–xxiv). Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) positions pedagogy as a practice-changing practice enacted through public, reason-giving deliberation, offering a disciplined structure for improvement in and on practice (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 30). Contemplative education further contributes to this transition by cultivating inner awareness, ethical discernment, and presence—capacities essential for meaningful application of theory in complex, real-world contexts (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84). These frameworks consolidate literature across CPAR, ELT, and contemplative sources, where seminar reasoning is made public, criteria are explicit, and design work is iteratively tested.

This article introduces and examines the ESSENCE process—a seven-step instructional framework developed to address a persistent gap in graduate education: the absence of a structured pathway for translating philosophical and educational theory into coherent, practice-based design. Originally implemented in a graduate-level Philosophy and Theory of Education course, ESSENCE was designed to foster analytical thinking, collaborative inquiry, and reflective growth within a challenging yet safe intellectual space. The process comprises seven sequenced steps: (1) Engage— activate presence and curiosity through reflective or creative tasks presence; (2) Socratize—deepen inquiry through structured Socratic dialogue; (3) Search—investigate key questions and synthesize findings; (4) Examine—present, critique, and build meaning through dialogue; (5) Network—collaborate to connect diverse perspectives; (6) Conceptualize—build integrative frameworks linking theory and practice; and (7) Evolve—reflect to deepen insight and guide growth. The instructional design emphasized analytic rigor through achievement criteria and product-based outputs; formative mechanisms such as rubrics and peer feedback; and reflective practice via guided journals. These components align with Critical Participatory Action Research's improvement orientation and Experiential Learning Theory's sequencing from experience to application (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 30; Kolb, 2015, pp. xxiii–xxiv), and collectively support learners in progressing from conceptual understanding (KNOW), through integrative application (BE), toward reflective transformation (TRANSFORM).

Accordingly, this study examines whether instruction through the ESSENCE process enhances learning achievement, supports the design of Integrated Learning Units that coherently synthesize philosophical and educational theories with contemplative education and the sufficiency economy philosophy, and deepens reflective thinking indicative of self-change. Contemplative education emphasizes inner awareness, ethical discernment, and presence as foundations for meaningful learning and transformation (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84). The sufficiency economy philosophy, rooted in Thailand's development context and increasingly recognized in global discourse, promotes moderation, reasonableness, and resilience as guiding principles for sustainable decision-making and personal growth (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2007, pp. xv–xvi; UNDP, 2024, pp. 1–3; UNESCO, 2012, pp. 43–45). To examine these outcomes, the study employs four ESSENCE-based lesson plans, a pre- and post-instruction achievement test, an analytic product rubric, and weekly reflective journals. These instruments aim to clarify how structured reasoning, collaborative design, and reflective refinement can translate theory into action within graduate-level instruction and inform broader educational practice.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A growing body of scholarship identifies structured instructional routines that help graduate learners move from "theory talk" to "theory-in-action." Recent research on formative assessment demonstrates that frequent, criterion-referenced feedback and instructional adjustment support learning improvement and self-regulated learning in higher education contexts (Carney et al., 2022, pp. 1–3). The theory of Experiential Learning proposes a process logic—experience → reflection → conceptualization → experimentation—that guides inquiry toward application in higher education and adult learning contexts (Kolb, 2015, pp. xxiii–xxiv). Sociocultural theory emphasizes the power of structured collaboration: assisted

performance within the zone of proximal development enables learners to move from current to potential functioning through guided support (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 89–90), while classic tutoring research describes scaffolding as graduated, contingent assistance that allows learners to complete tasks beyond their unaided capacity (Wood et al., 1976, p. 90). In parallel, structured and semi-structured reflection—such as guided journals, debriefs, and facilitated small-group dialogue—is reported to enhance learners' understanding of reflection and reflective capacity in university settings (Phenwan, 2024, pp. 5–7). The theory of Andragogy, which emphasizes self-direction, experience-based inquiry, and problem-centered tasks, aligns with the needs of adult learners, including university lecturers (Knowles et al., 2020, pp. 4–6). Contemplative education further contributes to this transition by cultivating inner awareness, ethical discernment, and presence—capacities essential for meaningful application of theory in complex, real-world contexts (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84). The sufficiency economy philosophy, rooted in Thailand's development context and increasingly recognized in global discourse, promotes moderation, reasonableness, and resilience as guiding principles for sustainable decision-making and personal growth (UNDP, 2007, pp. xv–xvi; UNDP, 2024, pp. 1–3; UNESCO, 2012, pp. 43–45). Taken together, these strands of scholarship highlight key mechanisms—feedback, experiential sequencing, collaborative support, reflective practice, and adult learning principles—that facilitate the translation of theory into practice; however, they are often addressed as discrete approaches rather than integrated within a coherent, multi-step instructional framework. This limitation is particularly salient in graduate-level philosophy and theory of education, where learners are expected not only to understand complex theoretical perspectives but also to enact them through instructional design and reflective professional development. In response to this gap, the ESSENCE instructional process is conceptualized as an integrative framework that synthesizes these theoretical traditions into a structured routine oriented toward transformative learning and professional growth.

Guided by this literature, the study is grounded in the proposition that a structured, multi-step routine like the ESSENCE process may enhance graduate learning in three key areas: (a) improving learning achievement, (b) strengthening the translation of philosophical and educational theory into integrated design products, and (c) deepening reflective thinking indicative of professional growth. These theoretical foundations align with specific stages of the ESSENCE process—for example, Socratic dialogue reflects CPAR's public reasoning (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 30), while sequenced experiential tasks mirror ELT's learning cycle (Kolb, 2015, pp. xxiii–xxiv). Frequent, criterion-referenced feedback and instructional adjustment support formative assessment by enabling learning improvement and self-regulation over time (Carney et al., 2022, pp. 1–3), and assisted performance and scaffolding correspond to collaborative inquiry and peer support (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 89–90; Wood et al., 1976, p. 90). Structured reflection practices are embedded through guided journals and debriefs (Phenwan, 2024, pp. 5–7), while adult learning principles from Andragogy inform the design of self-directed, problem-centered tasks (Knowles et al., 2020, pp. 4–6). Finally, contemplative education and the sufficiency economy philosophy provide ethical and reflective dimensions that reinforce the process's emphasis on personal transformation and sustainable learning (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84; UNDP, 2007, pp. xv–xvi; UNDP, 2024, pp. 1–3; UNESCO, 2012, pp. 43–45).

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research design, the study employed a classroom action research approach grounded in the principles of Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) to examine the outcomes of the ESSENCE instructional process in a graduate Philosophy and Theory of Education course. The ESSENCE process served as the central instructional and inquiry framework guiding the action research cycles, ensuring alignment between the research objectives, instructional design, and reflective practice. Consistent with CPAR, inquiry was treated as a practice-changing practice enacted through public, reason-giving deliberation and iterative spirals of planning, acting/observing, reflecting, and replanning (Kemmis et al., 2014, pp. 19–21, 30).

For the conceptual framework, this study is guided by nine foundational educational theories that were selected to inform both the design and implementation of the ESSENCE instructional process. These theoretical bases support the seven structured phases—Engage, Socratize, Search, Examine, Network, Conceptualize, and Evolve—and clarify how abstract educational theory is operationalized into instructional practice. Together, the theories and ESSENCE phases form a coherent structure that explains how the instructional process fosters three analytically distinct but related outcomes: learning achievement, integrated learning unit (ILU) design quality, and reflective thinking. Figure 1 presents the connections among the theoretical foundations, the independent variable (ESSENCE instructional process), and the three corresponding dependent variables examined in this study.

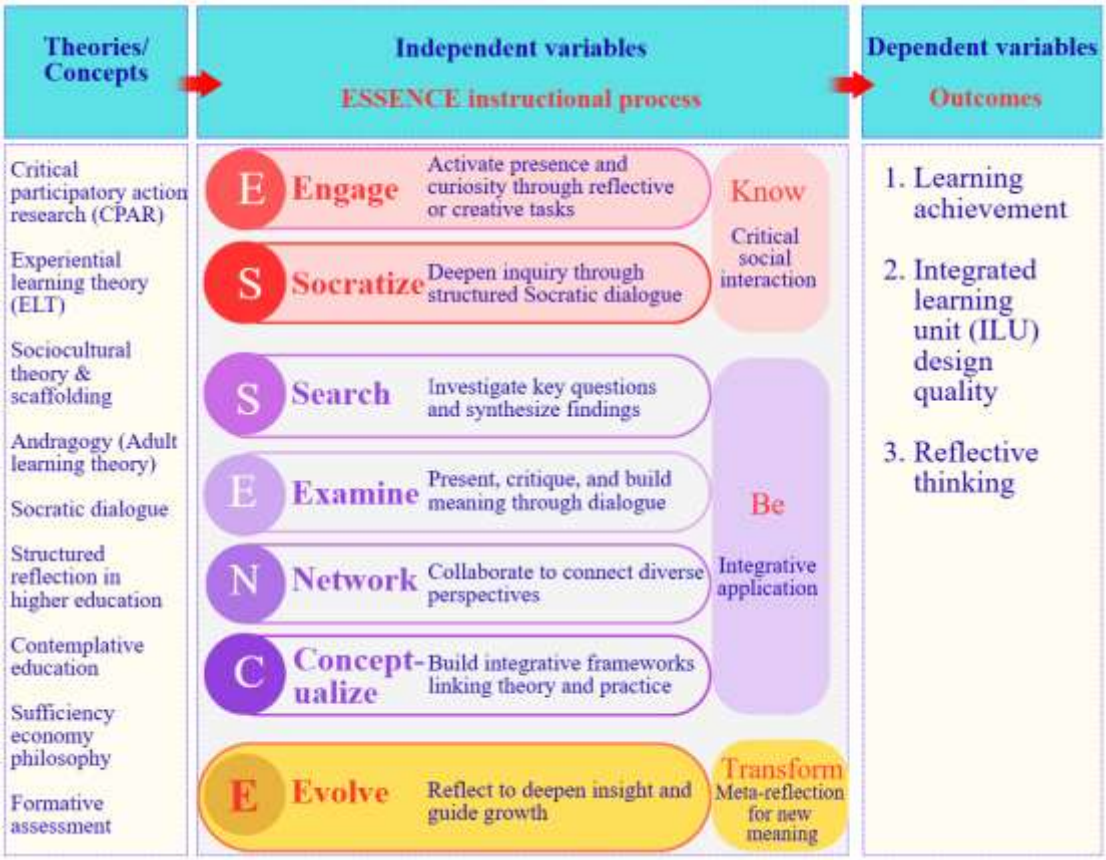

Figure 1: Conceptual framework linking foundational theories to the ESSENCE instructional process and outcomes

The study population comprised 11 full-time university lecturers from non-education fields who were enrolled in a graduate Philosophy and Theory of Education course in Semester 1, Academic Year 2025 (four doctoral, seven master's). All participants were included in the study. Instruction was delivered fully online across four consecutive weeks via Google Meet, with synchronous sessions supported by Padlet. During the final presentation phase, learners presented their Integrated Learning Units (ILUs) in a hybrid format: one co-instructor—responsible for a separate module on educational quality assurance—attended the in-person session, while the researcher participated remotely from another province. All participants provided informed consent prior to data collection.

Instructional instruments consisted of four ESSENCE-based online lesson plans, each explicitly aligned with the seven-step ESSENCE instructional process. The four lesson plans were implemented sequentially as follows: (1) Lesson Plan 1: Foundations of Philosophical Inquiry and Public Reasoning through the ESSENCE Process; (2) Lesson Plan 2: Educational Philosophy, Theory, and Policy Analysis through the ESSENCE Process; (3) Lesson Plan 3: Integrative Learning Unit Design through the ESSENCE Process; and (4) Lesson Plan 4: Reflective Integration and Professional Development through the ESSENCE Process. Each lesson plan was implemented in a continuous 6-hour session (3-hour morning + 3-hour afternoon, with a 1-hour lunch break). The lesson plans incorporated philosophical content and structured activities aligned with contemplative education principles—such as guided inquiry, ethical discernment, and inner awareness (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84). In addition, the design of the Integrated Learning Unit (ILU) required participants to synthesize educational theory with the sufficiency economy philosophy, emphasizing moderation, reasonableness, and resilience in instructional decisions (UNDP, 2007, pp. xv–xvi; UNDP, 2024, pp. 1–3; UNESCO, 2012, pp. 43–45). Data-collection instruments included three complementary tools: (a) a four-option multiple-choice achievement test administered before and after the intervention, (b) an analytic rubric to assess the group product—an Integrated Learning Unit (ILU), with criteria aligned to intended learning outcomes and quality levels described along a continuum to support formative feedback and self-assessment (Brookhart, 2013, pp. 6–7), and (c) a qualitative recording instrument comprising a weekly reflective journal protocol (via Padlet) collected throughout the four-week intervention.

For learning support (Non-Graded), plan-specific formative quizzes provided rapid feedback and diagnostic insight. Their use followed principles indicating that frequent, criterion-referenced feedback and instructional adjustment support learning improvement and self-regulated learning over time (Carney et al., 2022, pp. 1–3). These quizzes were not included in summative scoring but served to reinforce conceptual understanding and support instructional decision-making throughout the intervention. To ensure instructional validity and contextual relevance, all lesson plans and the ESSENCE instructional process were reviewed by three doctoral-level experts specializing in education theory, curriculum and instruction, and educational measurement and research. Six domains were evaluated using a five-level scale (5 = excellent to 1 = needs improvement), with all domain means exceeding the preset criterion of 3.50. These domains included: (1) alignment and coherence, (2) target group appropriateness, (3) ESSENCE process quality, (4) instructional effectiveness, (5) unit-specific design quality, and (6) online delivery suitability. These dimensions reflect critical aspects of graduate-level instructional design, including philosophical integration, contemplative learning, and responsiveness

to learner diversity. In addition, the product-assessment rubric underwent expert review for content validity using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC; $+1/0/-1$) and a four-level rating of descriptor clarity. Overall properties considered included validity, reliability, feasibility, and fairness (Brookhart, 2013, pp. 6–7).

To ensure instructional validity and contextual relevance, the ESSENCE instructional process and all associated lesson plans were reviewed by three doctoral-level experts specializing in education theory, curriculum and instruction, and educational measurement and research. Six domains were evaluated using a five-level scale (5 = excellent to 1 = needs improvement), with all domain means exceeding the preset criterion of 3.50. These domains included: (1) alignment and coherence, (2) target group appropriateness, (3) ESSENCE process quality, (4) instructional effectiveness, (5) unit-specific design quality, and (6) online delivery suitability. Together, these domains capture key dimensions of graduate-level instructional design, including philosophical integration, contemplative learning, and responsiveness to learner diversity. In addition, the product-assessment rubric underwent expert review for content validity using the Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC; +1/0/–1) and a structured four-level rating of descriptor clarity. Overall properties considered included validity, reliability, feasibility, and fairness (Brookhart, 2013, pp. 6–7).

Achievement test initially developed as a 45-item draft was reviewed by three experts; all items met IOC ≥ .50 (range .67–1.00). To guard against chance agreement, retention decisions referenced binomial-based critical values for Lawshe-type content validation (Ayre & Scally, 2014, pp. 79–81). A pilot try-out was then conducted with 29 in-service teachers enrolled in the same program and semester as the study group, but assigned to a different classroom section. Retention criteria were p = .20–.80 and r ≥ .20, resulting in a 34-item operational achievement test. The final test produced Cronbach's $\alpha = .858$. In addition, across the four lesson plans, a set of 25 formative quiz items was reviewed by four doctoral-level experts—two specializing in philosophy of education, one in curriculum and instruction, and one in educational measurement and research. All items achieved an Index of Item–Objective Congruence (IOC) greater than .50 and were revised prior to administration (Ayre & Scally, 2014, pp. 79–81).

In data collection, three sequential phases were implemented during Semester 1, Academic Year 2025: (1) Pre-intervention, which included orientation and a pretest; (2) During intervention, which involved four ESSENCE-based lessons with weekly reflective journals and Week 5 Integrated Learning Unit (ILU) presentations used for formative feedback; and (3) Post-intervention, which comprised a post-test and submission of revised ILUs for summative assessment. All ILUs were scored by the researcher using the analytic rubric. To examine scoring consistency, one external expert (Ph.D.; instructor of the same course) co-rated two of the five group products. Agreement was high: Group 1 = 27.50 vs. 27.50; Group 2 = 26.00 vs. 25.50 (same performance level). The remaining three group products were rated by the researcher. Reflective journals invited participants to examine how contemplative education and the sufficiency economy philosophy informed their instructional design and personal growth. Contemplative education emphasizes inner awareness, ethical discernment, and presence as foundations for meaningful learning and transformation (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84). The sufficiency economy philosophy promotes moderation, reasonableness, and resilience as guiding principles for sustainable decision-making and self-development (UNDP, 2007, pp.

xv–xvi; UNDP, 2024, pp. 1–3; UNESCO, 2012, pp. 43–45). These dimensions were explicitly embedded in the reflective journal prompts. Informed consent was obtained, and identifying details were removed from reported excerpts in accordance with institutional expectations.

For data analysis, reflective journals were examined using a six-phase thematic analysis with trustworthiness strategies—auditability, credibility, and dependability—to allow readers to trace how codes and themes were produced (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). For content-analytic staging, the process followed four analytic phases—decontextualisation, recontextualisation, categorisation, and compilation—used to guide interpretation (Bengtsson, 2016, p. 9). To enhance credibility, the draft analytic descriptions and interpretations were returned to all participants for verification (Nowell et al., 2017, p. 3). Learning achievement was analyzed using pre- and post-test scores summarized by Mean ($\bar{x}$) and Standard Deviation (SD, which are appropriate for classroom action research with a small sample size where the emphasis is on descriptive trends rather than statistical generalization. Application of knowledge was evaluated through Integrated Learning Unit (ILU) quality using the analytic rubric (Brookhart, 2013, pp. 6–7).

IV. RESULTS

From the analysis of data collected from the sample—11 graduate students—the research results can be summarized as follows.

1. Learning achievement after instruction using the ESSENCE process

The learning achievement of 9 graduate students (excluding one student who did not complete the pretest and another student who was absent during the posttest) is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Learning achievement scores before and after instruction through the ESSENCE process

Test	Full score	Number of students	$\bar{x}$	%	SD
Pre-test	34	9	16.20	47.65	5.29
Post-test	34	9	23.11	67.97	5.38

From Table 1, the posttest mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 23.11) is clearly higher than the pretest means score ($\bar{x}$ = 16.20), indicating that the ESSENCE process can improve learners' learning achievement.

From Table 1, the posttest mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 23.11) is higher than the pretest mean score ($\bar{x}$ = 16.20). The percentage of correct responses increased from 47.65% to 67.97%, indicating an improvement in learning achievement among the graduate students following instruction using the ESSENCE process.

2. Ability to design an Integrated Learning Unit aligned with philosophical and educational theory, contemplative education, and the sufficiency economy philosophy

The researcher assessed the group product, Integrated Learning Unit (ILU) design, using an analytic rubric with a full score of 30 points. The quality levels were defined as follows: Excellent (27–30 points), Good (23–26 points), Fair (19–22 points), and Needs Improvement (below 19 points). The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Assessment results for the quality of graduate students' group work: "Integrated Learning Unit Design"

Group	Score received (30 points)	Quality level
1	26.00	Good
2	27.50	Excellent
3	24.00	Good
4	24.00	Good
5	23.75	Good
Overall mean ($\bar{x}$)	25.05	Good
Standard deviation (SD)	1.64	–

From Table 2, the graduate students' group products achieved a mean score of 25.05 points, corresponding to the Good quality level. The results indicate that the groups were able to design Integrated Learning Units that aligned philosophical and educational theory, contemplative education, and the sufficiency economy philosophy as specified in the assessment rubric.

3. Quality of reflection on learning and self-change

From the qualitative content analysis of reflective journals voluntarily recorded by graduate students over four weeks (non-graded), 10 out of 11 graduate students regularly participated in reflection activities. Absences were non-repeating and did not substantially affect overall data coverage. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of respondents for each item, with individual participants potentially contributing to multiple categories. The results are presented in Tables 3–5.

Table 3: Initial reflections after class

Category	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Overall feelings	Enthusiastic (5), Fun (2), Meaningful (1)	Opened perspectives (2), Learned more (2), Fun (1), Excited (1)	Fun (2), Relaxed (1), Alert (1), Impressed (1), Able to develop oneself (1)	Calm/still/deep (3), Gained knowledge/ developed (3), Satisfied (1), Self-review (1)
Impressive activities	Philosophical questioning (7), Information searching (1)	Designing a dream school via Canva (2), Debate (2), Group work/discussion (2)	Theory presentation (4), Group activity (1), Practicing asking questions from experience (1)	Deep listening (3), Lesson-plan design (2), Mandala activity (1), Nature photography (1), Researching (1)

Table 3: (Continued) Initial reflections after class

Category	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Challenges/ solutions	Little time / worked in free time (4), Technical problems / sought other channels (3), Lack of confidence in one's own knowledge (1)	Power outage / asked friends (4), Little time (1), Difficult content / asked questions (1)	No problem (3), Did not understand the instruction / looked at friends' work (1), Time limit / simplified complexity (1)	Finding materials for a mandala / used what was available (4), Internet / borrowed from others (1), Physical readiness (1), No problem (2)
Key takeaways	Seeking knowledge (4), Philosophy is life (3), Quoting philosophers (1)	Philosophy is the compass of education (3), Education is life (2), Are highly related (1)	Learning together (3), Link between education–philosophy (2), Harmonize (1)	Integrating all components (4), One should be open-minded when listening (2), Learning should not forget the dimension of life (2)

Table 3 presents graduate students' weekly reflections during the four-week instructional segment. Data were drawn from voluntary, ungraded journal entries. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of respondents per item; individual graduate students may have contributed to multiple items.

From Table 3, graduate students' reflections varied across the four weeks in terms of emotional tone, perceived activities, and key takeaways. In Week 1, frequently reported descriptors included "enthusiastic" and "fun," whereas later weeks included terms such as "calm," "deep," and "self-review." Activities identified as impressive ranged from philosophical questioning and information searching in earlier weeks to deep listening and integrative design tasks in later weeks. Reported key takeaways also differed across weeks, as summarized in the table.

This shift may reflect cumulative engagement with the ESSENCE process, particularly the contemplative education activities introduced in the final week, which may have supported deeper reflective engagement among the graduate students.

Table 4: Analysis of learners' learning pathways over 4 weeks

Topic	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
What was learned	Meaning of philosophy (2), Four schools of philosophy (1), Questioning and critique (2), Philosophical concepts/schools (1)	Various schools of educational philosophy (3), Linking to the National Education Plan (1), Comparing ideas (1)	Various learning theories (3), Relationship between philosophy and theory (2), Integration into practice (1)	Contemplative education (4), Integrating contemplative education and the Sufficiency Economy (2)
Application in life	Questioning life (2), Self-reflection (2), Understanding cause–effect (1)	Analyzing ways of living (2), Understanding the environment and oneself (2)	Listening to others deeply (2), Analytical problem solving (1), Filtering knowledge (1)	Developing emotion, thinking, mind (2), Knowing oneself to live with others (2), Deep listening (1)
Application to the teaching profession	Designing instructional models (2), Building learner attributes (1), Stimulating thinking (1)	Setting a learning compass (2), Analyzing learner context (2), Designing assessment (1)	Selecting theories by content (2), Developing learners' thinking skills (2), Integrating theory with context (1)	Integrating learning activities (2), Engage learners in mindful presence (1), Deep listening to students (2)

Table 4 presents graduate students' reflections on their learning pathways across four weeks, categorized into three dimensions: content learned, application in life, and application to the teaching profession. Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of respondents per item; individual graduate students may have contributed to multiple items.

From Table 4, graduate students' reflections are reported across four weeks in three dimensions: content learned, application in life, and application to the teaching profession. Reported content included philosophical concepts, learning theories, contemplative education, and the sufficiency economy philosophy. Reflections related to life application addressed themes such as self-reflection, understanding of emotions, and interpersonal awareness. In the professional domain, responses included instructional design considerations, learner development, and practices such as deep listening and integration of learning activities.

These developments may reflect cumulative engagement with the ESSENCE process, particularly the contemplative activities introduced in Week 4, which may have supported deeper reflection and integrative thinking among the graduate students.

Table 5: Synthesis of learners' suggestions by category and week

Category	W1	W2	W3	W4	Example suggestions
Time management	6	6	2	–	"Adjust the time for some activities, e.g., information-searching activities" (W1); "Time for each activity should be increased so that information can be synthesized better" (W2)
Media and learning resources	3	2	4	1	"Add handouts to show the whole course and its content" (W1); "I would like more real case studies or sample teaching videos" (W3)
Teaching techniques	1	2	2	1	"Adjust the Canva 'build a school' activity because learners are diverse" (W2); "Summarize key points periodically for learners with less background" (W3)
Participation/reflection	1	1	2	3	"Propose activities for collaborative knowledge exchange" (W3); "Add reflection prompts from what was learned via video viewing" (W4)

Table 5: (Continued) Synthesis of learners' suggestions by category and week

Category	W1	W2	W3	W4	Example suggestions
Online constraints	1	1	–	–	"Equipment and facilities for learning do not support rapid submission" (W1); "Hold in-class learning in some weeks" (W2)
Satisfaction	1	1	4	5	"No need to adjust anything; today's activities are well-balanced" (W3); "No improvement needed" (W4)

Table 5 synthesizes graduate students' suggestions reported across four weeks and categorized by theme. Numbers indicate the frequency of comments per category per week, and example quotations illustrate representative feedback.

From Table 5, comments related to time management were reported most frequently in Weeks 1 and 2, with a total of 12 comments across these weeks. Satisfaction-related comments were also reported in later weeks, including four comments in Week 3 and five comments in Week 4 indicating that no improvement was needed. Suggestions related to media and learning resources, teaching techniques, and participation or reflection activities were reported across the four weeks, as summarized in the table.

These patterns may reflect graduate students' adaptive engagement with the ESSENCE process, as well as the increasing resonance of collaborative and contemplative elements introduced in the later weeks.

V. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Within a five-week instructional segment, the ESSENCE process served as a structured bridge between educational theory and instructional practice in a graduate-level Philosophy and Theory of Education course. While the full course addressed additional topics (e.g., educational quality assurance), the ESSENCE process was implemented over 27 hours—four weeks of instruction and one week of presentation—forming the core philosophical and theoretical component. Among learners with paired data (n = 9), post-instruction achievement increased from 16.20 to 23.11 out of 34 points, indicating a measurable improvement in learning achievement within this instructional context. Group Integrated Learning Units averaged 25.05 out of 30 (Good), with one group rated Excellent, demonstrating learners' ability to synthesize philosophical and educational theories with contemplative education and the sufficiency economy philosophy into coherent instructional designs. This synthesis reflects learners' capacity to integrate ethical discernment and inner awareness from contemplative education (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84), alongside principles of moderation, reasonableness, and resilience

from the sufficiency economy philosophy (UNDP, 2007, pp. xv–xvi; UNDP, 2024, pp. 1–3; UNESCO, 2012, pp. 43–45). Reflective journals revealed a developmental trajectory from initial enthusiasm to more deliberate engagement: Week 1 responses included "fun," "exciting," and "meaningful," while Week 4 responses shifted to "calm," "deep," and "self-review." Key takeaways evolved from "seeking knowledge" and "philosophy is life" to "integrating all components" and "learning should not forget the dimension of life." This pattern suggests a gradual shift from externally focused engagement toward a more inward-oriented professional stance. Process feedback also changed over time, with early concerns about time and resources giving way to increasing satisfaction; notably, five learners in Week 4 stated "no improvement needed." Taken together, these patterns suggest that the ESSENCE process—through its combination of public reasoning, collaborative design, and guided reflection—supported learners in moving from "talking theory" to "doing theory in action," within the scope and limitations of this instructional context. Taken together, improvements in learning achievement, the quality of integrated learning unit design, and the depth of reflective engagement indicate that the ESSENCE process functions as an integrative pedagogical mechanism—supporting not only cognitive gains, but also design competence and reflective transformation in graduate-level instruction.

These findings align with mechanisms identified in the literature. Frequent, criterion-referenced feedback—delivered through formative quizzes and rubrics—likely supported learning improvement by tightening feedback loops and enabling instructional adjustment and self-regulated learning, consistent with contemporary formative assessment research (Carney et al., 2022, pp. 1–3). Collaborative work on Integrated Learning Units leveraged assisted performance within the zone of proximal development and scaffolding principles (Vygotsky, 1978, pp. 89–90; Wood et al., 1976, p. 90), enabling learners to complete tasks beyond their unaided capacity. Sequencing activities along the cycle of experience → reflection → conceptualization → experimentation followed the logic of Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 2015, pp. xxiii–xxiv), helping abstract ideas become testable instructional plans. Semi-structured reflective tasks—such as guided journals and small-group debriefs—aligned with research showing that structured reflection enhances reflective capacity (Phenwan, 2024, pp. 5–7). For an adult cohort of university lecturers, the ESSENCE process's emphasis on self-direction, experience-based inquiry, and problem-centered tasks resonated with the principles of Andragogy (Knowles et al., 2020, pp. 4–6). Ethical and reflective dimensions embedded in the ESSENCE process also align with contemplative education and the sufficiency economy philosophy, which emphasize personal transformation and sustainable decision-making in educational contexts (Zajonc, 2013, pp. 83–84; UNDP, 2007, pp. xv–xvi; UNDP, 2024, pp. 1–3; UNESCO, 2012, pp. 43–45). Finally, framing the course as collaborative inquiry about practice situated the work within the framework of Critical Participatory Action Research, which defines pedagogy as a practice-changing practice enacted through public, reason-giving deliberation (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 30). This convergence between instructional design and research methodology strengthens the interpretive coherence of the findings.

SUGGESTION

The findings suggest that future studies applying the ESSENCE process should examine its effectiveness across larger and more diverse learner groups, compare its impact with other instructional models, and explore variations in online, hybrid, and in-person delivery formats. Longitudinal research is recommended to investigate sustained changes in learners' philosophical reasoning, reflective capacity, and professional attitudes following course completion. Further development of standardized tools—such as reflection-quality measures, integrative-design rubrics, and process-evaluation instruments—may strengthen validity and support broader adoption of the ESSENCE framework in graduate instruction.

REFERENCES

Ayre, C., & Scally, A. J. (2014). Critical values for Lawshe's content validity ratio: Revisiting the original methods of calculation. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development, 47*(1), 79–86. https://doi.org/10.1177/0748175613513808.

Brookhart, S. M. (2013). *How to create and use rubrics for formative assessment and grading*. ASCD.

Bengtsson, M. (2016). How to plan and perform a qualitative study using content analysis. *NursingPlus Open, 2*, 8–14. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.npls.2016.01.001.

Carney, M., Cowie, B., & Moreland, J. (2022). Formative assessment and learning improvement: Research evidence and implications for practice. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice, 29*(1), 1–17. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2022.2031823.

Kemmis, S., McTaggart, R., & Nixon, R. (2014). *The action research planner: Doing critical participatory action research*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-4560-67-2.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., III, & Swanson, R. A. (2020). *The adult learner* (8th ed.). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429299612.

Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). FT Press.

National Economic and Social Development Council. (2023). *The 13th national economic and social development plan (2023–2027)*. Office of the Prime Minister.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 16*, 1–13. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847.

OECD. (2024). *Education at a glance 2024: OECD indicators*. OECD Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1787/69096873-en.

Office of the Education Council. (2023). *Education in Thailand 2022*. Ministry of Education.

Phenwan, T. (2024). How the concept of reflection is taught in higher education: A narrative review. *MedEdPublish, 13*(1), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.12688/mep.23153.1.

UNDP. (2007). *Thailand human development report 2007: Sufficiency economy and human development*. United Nations Development Programme.

UNDP. (2024). *Sufficiency economy philosophy: Thailand's contribution to sustainable development*. United Nations Development Programme.

UNESCO. (2012). *Education for sustainable development sourcebook*. UNESCO.

UNESCO. (2023). *Global education monitoring report 2023/4: Technology in education—A tool on whose terms? (Executive summary)*. UNESCO.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Wood, D., Bruner, J. S., & Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 17*(2), 89–100. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1469-7610.1976.tb00381.x.

Zajonc, A. (2013). Contemplative pedagogy: A quiet revolution in higher education. In S. R. Steinberg & G. Jean-Marie (Eds.), *Revolutionizing education: Youth participatory action research in motion* (pp. 83–94). Routledge.

The content, as well as the use of language in the article, is the responsibility of the author.