

KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS SERVICE LEARNING SUBJECT

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ABSTRACT

Service-learning has a long and distinguished history of providing valuable experiences to students across all academic levels. Professional disciplines are well situated to provide students with opportunities related to service-learning to community. This article this issue describe a service-learning initiative implemented in a bachelor student t and diploma's student, whose taking service learning subject. The purposes of the program were to enhance students' soft skills in leadership, teamwork, communication, decision making, problem solving, critical thinking and networking. Data on students' perceptions were collected for semester four of the program. Students perceived gains in soft skills are listed. For this reason, it is of crucial importance to investigate the attitude and perception of university students towards community service. The study area was University Selangor College Islamic Selangor. The simple random technique was used to select 200 students from the university community from almost all faculties using frequency and percentage tables in the analysis of the data. The researcher observed from the findings that students are altruistic towards voluntary activities and that previous knowledge and experience influences their attitude and perception towards community service. In spite of this revelation students do not usually join voluntary associations Therefore researchers are hopeful that this work will lead to further research into the reasons why students do not join voluntary associations on campus though they have good community service experience and participation.

Keywords: Service- learning, community service, university student, attitudes, perception

Introduction

Service learning is an education approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs. Service –learning involves student in services projects to apply classroom learning for local agencies that exist to effect positive change in the community. Service-learning is an important educational method that develops students' knowledge and skills to become contributing and useful citizens (Arenas, Bosworth, & Kwandayi, 2006; Giles & Eyler, 1994).

The term “service learning” likewise holds different meanings for people, and some resist even using the word “service.” Some would prefer the term “community-based learning,” others argue for a broader language such as “civic engagement.” Here we mostly use the term “service learning” and are referring to course-based community work done by students. Clearly, the principles, supports, and challenges to this work are applicable to broader work as well, and we want to focus on these broader issues. (Lori.J no date)

Service-learning, a form of community-based education, is a structured learning activity where community service and academic objectives are pursued concurrently. Balance between service and learning, integral involvement of community partners, and emphasis on reflection are important factors in service-learning (Bringle, et.al 2004). Service-learning activities establish a reciprocal relationship between community partners and campus instructors. In successful service-learning activities campus instructors ensure that the service experience is consistent with the course goals and objectives while community partners ensure that student activities are consistent with their goals and needs (Zlotkowski E. (1999).

Service-learning's conceptual foundation can be traced back to John Dewey (1859–1952) who believed that education should be concerned with developing students' commitment and ability to contribute to society. Service-learning is also intended to help students “internalize” their role as a care provider in the context of a community and bring community engagement and educational objectives together (Bailit, 1999).

There are many benefits of community service-learning. Community-based education using service-learning prepares students in cultural awareness, social responsibility, and communication skills. Potentially it can affect dental students' values and behaviors to caring for the underserved in the community (Rubin, et.al (2008). Yoder stated that service-learning will create a deeper understanding of the dynamics, the assets, and the challenges of the community.

The student of Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor (KUIS) community-based service-learning program began in few semesters back. In 2016, it became a required formal stand-alone course for fourth semester students where they were assigned to spending an average of 14 weeks throughout their senior year. Students' service-learning is assessed and reinforced by self-reflection such as journal entries, blogging, video editing, report writing and self-evaluation.

One of the objectives of service-learning is to improve students' attitude toward community service so that they continue to volunteer to meet community needs after graduation. While there is limited data directly related to service-learning as an educational method and its impact on Khimad Ummah students' attitude toward community service, several articles reported improved attitude, value, or intention to help the underserved after community-based, which may or may not have adopted service-learning (emphasizing balance between service and learning and self-reflection) as an educational method.

Brondani stated self-reflection may positively impact students' attitude about service and community (26). The purpose of this study was to evaluate the service learning program at KUIS in the academic year 2019–2020 and to examine how the service-learning program has impacted students' attitude toward community service. Association between students' characteristics and attitude toward community service was also assessed.

Service Learning.

Service-learning is an important educational method that ensures the development of students in many ways (Furco, 1996; Kaye, 2004; Lane, 2008). As an educational experience, it provides students ample opportunities to actively participate in an organized service-activity to satisfy an identified human and community need (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009). During the process of service delivery, students reflect and reciprocate on the community service (Keen & Hall, 2009; Schwartzman, 2007). This reciprocation develops their understanding of course content, broader

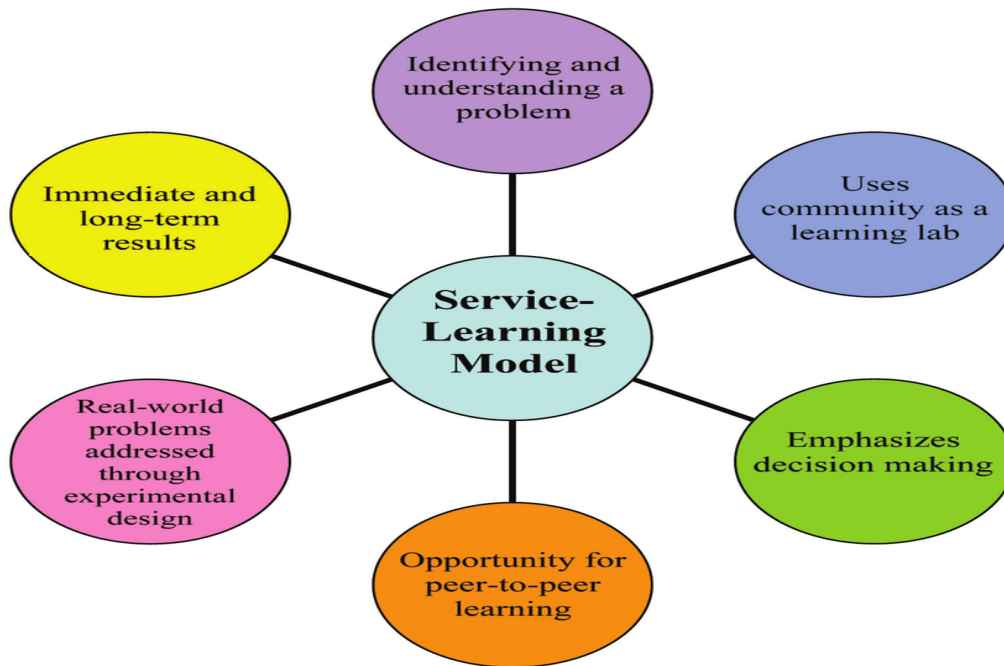
their appreciation of the discipline and enhances their sense of civic responsibility (Cone, 1996; Saltmarsh, 1996). Research has confirmed that service-learning effectively connects service in the community with classroom learning. In this way, students find wider hands-on real-life experiences to apply their newly learned knowledge and skills in the community context (Bringle & Hatcher, 1995; Speck & Hoppe, 2004). This characteristic of service-learning makes it a distinct educational approach (Reinke, 2003). The process of doing reflection and acquisition of new skills becomes possible when students get practically involved in service-learning activities in the community setting (Yorio & Ye, 2011). In this way, students have ample opportunities to develop collaborative and empowering relationships with their communities (Battistoni, 2002; Maybach, 1996). As a critical pedagogy, service-learning provides many benefits to students and communities alike such as civic development, professional skills enhancement and personal growth as well as solution of problems of communities (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Raskoff, 1994). Research has established that the benefits of service-learning are not limited to students or communities only. It also benefits schools, colleges and universities in mitigating community needs, responding to community needs and identifying employer needs (Desmond & Stahl, 2011; Diambra, McClam, Fuss, Burton, & Fudge, 2009). Service learning is a credit bearing educational experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. Unlike extracurricular voluntary service, service learning is a course-based service experience that produces the best outcomes when meaningful service activities are related to course material through reflection activities such as writing and small group discussions. Unlike practica and internships, the experiential activity in a service learning course is not necessarily skill-based within the context of professional education.

Service-Learning Model

Within a service-learning model, participants work with members of the community to identify a community problem, solve the problem, make critical decisions as a team on how to solve or address issues, and work together to create sustainable results (Fig. 1). Using service-learning in the classroom allows students to see how issues within communities, locally or globally, affect their lives and those of their families. Integrating this teaching method across various academic disciplines broadens students' learning experience. A few successful projects with kids are river clean-ups, recycling programs, campaign letter writing, and informational newsletters for the community. Through engaging activities, young people begin to identify a situation and work on implementing a solution within their communities. We know that students retain more by participating in service-learning activities (Gallini and Moely 2003). Service-learning supports the old adage—Tell me and I forget; teach me and I remember; involve me and I learn. Components of service-learning curricula include the voices and input of the community and the participants, allowing students to work within their own communities to solve critical and vital issues. By blending service-learning, students learn about their environment and science through a natural, problem-based inquiry manner. The academic side and real-world applications of science introduce students through the activities. Students work on issues that affect their entire community and learn the importance of community's services. As they engage in their neighborhoods through service-learning approach, students learn strategies for becoming better environmental stewards.

Figure 1: Service-Learning Model

(Adopted from Nicole Webster and Edward Rajotte)



Benefits

Service-learning can positively impact students in a variety of ways. Service-learning improves students' personal efficacy, academic learning outcomes, commitment to service, moral development, and leadership and communications skills (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001). Service-learning benefits can be especially consequential to Low-Income First Generation (LIFG) college students. Yeh (2010) presents a framework linking service-learning to growth in four dimensions that influence persistence in college among LIFG college students. These dimensions are academic, psychosocial, personal and spiritual, and sociocultural/sociopolitical.

Academic Growth

Yeh (2010) indicates academic under preparation as a challenge for students, but gaining skills and a deeper understanding of course content translates to academic growth. Service-learning students apply academic concepts in a real-life situation, which reinforces classroom learning by allowing students to apply theoretical concepts. Service-learning projects call on students to exercise practical skills like networking, public speaking, organizing, and leadership while planning projects and interacting with their peers and the community members. Service-learning

opportunities often lead students to involvement in other non-traditional learning opportunities like study abroad or undergraduate research that further academic integration.

Psychosocial Growth

Yeh (2010) explains that students gain self-confidence when they see that they have the ability to make an impact through service-learning and use their service activities as a way to cope with stress. Students engaged in service-learning can find networks while working with fellow students, faculty and staff, and community members that provide support and a sense of connection to the institution and community. Thus, students develop resilience to combat feelings of alienation and lack of support that commonly hinder LIFG students.

Personal and Spiritual Growth

Yeh (2010) points out that students find personal meaning when service-learning exposes them to encounters that influence their future educational or career goals, and when they are able to help people who share similar backgrounds. Discovering a personal context in education is a source of inspiration and desire for self-improvement that encourages students to continue with their education.

Sociocultural and Socio-political Growth

Yeh (2010) suggests that students develop critical consciousness when they are able to see societal inequities and question the factors that lead to inequality and injustice. Sociocultural and sociopolitical growth result from heightened awareness and knowledge of societal inequities and can motivate students to persist in college in the hopes of facilitating social and political change.

Benefits for Faculty

Service-learning presents many professional and Stronger faculty-student relationships (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001)

- Potential to impact the student complexity of understanding, problem analysis, and critical thinking (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001)
- Ability to practice scholarship of application to serve the greater good (Boyer, 1990)

Benefits for Community Partners

Sandy & Holland (2006) found that community partners are motivated to participate in service-learning for the following reasons:

- Student volunteers from service-learning classes can sustain and enhance organizational capacity to help fulfill and advance an organization's mission.
- Students can positively impact client outcomes serving as effective mentors, tutors, or companions.
- Community partners can gain access to information and academic research to enhance their operations.

- Community partners can develop broader community networks and relationships with other organizations partnering with the institution.
- Association with the university increases visibility of an organization's work. Institutional Benefits

The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching's elective Classification on Community Engagement recognizes community-engaged institutions of higher education by evaluating their mission, identity, and commitment to the public good. Institutions seeking the classification undergo a process of self-assessment and quality improvement of institutional practice regarding community engagement (NERCHE, n.d.). Receiving the Carnegie Classification legitimizes and brings attention to an institution's community engagement endeavors and demonstrates commitment to public service (Campus Compact, 2015). The Carnegie Foundation identifies areas in need of continued development among all institutions and urges higher education institutions to "initiate study, dialogue, and reflection to promote and reward the scholarship of engagement more fully" (NERCHE, n.d.).

Methods

This research examined the experiences of students participating in university-level, academic Service-Learning Subjects. A key objective was to develop a better understanding of the ways service-learning participation can influence student knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, and in turn impact student persistence. The purpose of this study was not to generalize to the population of KUIS students who have participated in service-learning, but was instead a theory building exercise meant to generate an in-depth understanding of the service-learning experience for KUIS students. Identifying student participants for this study involved purposeful sampling at the institution (college or university), To gather information on a range of service-learning knowledge and perception. This study was conducted among Khidmah Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan students. Students conducted self-assessments of 11 items, while individual abilities were described in detail by authors of questionnaire in order to avoid erroneous interpretations of the specific abilities. Students completed the questionnaire voluntarily (using google doc forms) after taking the service-learning course. All students were informed that survey results would be analyzed and presented anonymously, though the institution would be identified. Respondents assessed the level of their individual skills according to a 5-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly Disagree" and 5 = "strongly Agree"). The data were analyzed using percentage in google doc responses.

Participants. All the students whose enroll subject Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan Session 1 in year 2020/2021 Semester four, five and seventh.

Results

Data for the first academic year of the study were collected from 41 student from various study programmed within Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan who had successfully passed the service-learning course in session 1, 2020.2021. Table 1 presents the knowledge of students regarding service-learning subject.

The findings of the study suggest that service-learning strategies have positive impacts on the development of students' knowledge. The limitations of this study were conducted with a small research (experimental) group of students who passed service-learning course. Based on this

research findings that the researcher can recommend service-learning as a suitable strategy for students' key competencies development.

Table 1: Show percentage of respondent to section 1- knowledge

No.	Questionnaire	Percentage (%)
1	Know about there is service-learning subject (Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan) in your semester structure.	30 (73.2%)
2	Know the department with responsible in handling service-learning subject activity in your college University.	27 (65.9%)
3	Know that there is specific lecturer that responsible to manage service-learning activities.	28 (68.3%)
4	Service-Learning works help those who are in need.	33 (80.5%)
5	Service-Learning works need commitment.	32 (78%)
6	Service-Learning works need sacrifice of energy.	31 (77.5%)
7	Service-Learning works need sacrifice of time.	36 (87.8%)
8	Service-Learning works need discipline	37 (90.2%)
9	Service-Learning important for country development.	31 (75.6%)
10	Service-Learning works need no enforcement	23 (56.1%)
11	There is no financial reward for service-learning work.	21(51.2%)

Table 2: show percentage of respondent to section 2- work

No.	Questionnaire	Percentage (%)
1	Service-Learning subject 'Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan give me opportunity to interact with my friends	34 (82.9 %)
2	Service-Learning subject 'Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan' creates teamwork.	34 (82.9 %)
3	Service-Learning subject 'Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan' makes me more responsible.	34 (82.9 %)
4	Service-Learning subject 'Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan' makes me a concerned individual.	28 (68.3 %)
5	Service-Learning subject 'Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan' makes the community and me to get closed together.	32 (78%)

6	Service-Learning subject 'Khidmat Ummah and Latihan Bina Insan' need to be given credit.	23 (56.1%)
7	I am not expecting material rewards from this service-learning subject activity.	21 (51.2%)
8	I am interested in volunteer activity.	22 (53.7%)
9	I always encourage my friends to participate in volunteer activity.	14 (34.1%)
10	I always find the opportunity to volunteer.	9 (22%)

The implementation of Service-Learning in teaching and learning requires detailed explanation related to evaluation of the course. Students must know that the community service they carry out is part course evaluation (Greenwood 2015).

This study found that the Service-Learning programme in the selected Malaysian public universities is implemented “bottom-up” through lecturers’ and students’ initiatives, and “topdown” through the university’s mission and vision in an effort to contribute knowledge, skills, expertise, and research findings, among others. The first factor that has encouraged the implementation of Service-Learning in a course of an academic programme in respective faculties, including lecturers’ intrinsic factors, lecturer’s knowledge and education, having relationship and experience with community, a university’s external activities, top-down project, the lecturer’s personality, spirituality factor, as well as religion. (Maharam Mamat, et.al: 2019).

However, some students were found to understand the lesson slightly different from their peers. This research provides guidelines for course instructors to design service-learning in academic courses and improve student learning. (Norlaile Salleh Hudin, et .al (2018)

Conclusion

In the long run, students will have the opportunity to provide a service to their University and the community through a service-learning model. In addition, students will show a marked improvement on the state assessment test. Through a service learning you are not only teaching what you love, but you also make a difference to kids and their communities. Students who participate in service-learning have deeper sense of responsibility and develop awareness towards their community roles as active citizens. Service-learning is also acknowledged to be different from other community interventions such as community service, volunteerism and philanthropic works. It has been termed a reciprocal method that benefits both, the community as well as students. Students find community as a laboratory for learning and community find services in turn from students.

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