

**A SERVICE-LEARNING FRAMEWORK TO ENHANCE STUDENT
ENGAGEMENT AND SOCIAL CONSCIOUSNESS**

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Thesis submitted to Centre for Graduate Studies, National Defence University of
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DEDICATION

*'I would like to dedicate this PHD dissertation to my late Father, Mr Paul Dorairaj,
who is and always will be my inspiration.'*

ABSTRACT

The practice of Service-Learning in Malaysian higher education institutions is growing with increasing attention given to perspectives of Service-Learning. The Malaysian education blueprint 2015-2025 for higher education highlighted the importance of Service-Learning as experiential learning in the design of programs to deliver positive learning experiences to tertiary students. This includes all community-related modules. A further initiative led by Ministry of Education to address the Shift 1 of the Malaysian Education Blueprint introduces Service-Learning Malaysia - University for Society (or SULAM) with a focus on integrating community needs with academic outcomes. All these pursuits demonstrate a strong emphasis on undergraduate community engagement and the development of a socially conscious society. However, the adaptation of Service-Learning in local private higher education institutions is not as widespread, limiting it from its tremendous potential as a catalyst to meet educational, societal and employment needs. The mounting literature on Service-Learning in the Malaysian context explores the concepts and practice, especially in public universities but limits discussion on how it can influence student engagement and social consciousness effectively in the Service-Learning process. This paper examines Service-Learning as a student engagement tool to enhance undergraduate's social consciousness in addressing real-world social issues. The research uncovers identifiable critical components to infuse in service-learning courses for more engaged and socially conscious graduates. The research employs a mixed-method analysis where the conceptual framework proposed is tested through qualitative and quantitative methods and analyzed in an MPU (Mata Pelajaran Umum) module as a Service-Learning course. In the first phase, a set of critical components

were identified as independent variables used in the coding of qualitative data attained via content analysis of 30 projects, capturing students' specific experiences. To ascertain these critical components prominently from student's perspective, interviews were conducted with service -learners. The second phase further determines the levels of each critical component and examines the relationship between student engagement and social consciousness, where correlation and regression testing were conducted. The findings of qualitative analysis revealed that all the critical components emerged in the service-learning experience through qualitative statements; awareness, understanding, involvement, action and reflection. Quantitatively, with data collected from 190 service-learners through a questionnaire, the descriptive results reflected varying levels of the critical components for various dimensions of the components. Examining the strength of the relationships between the critical components and students' engagement, Pearson's correlation results revealed that all the relationships were positively correlated and significant with differing degrees of strengths. All critical components were also positively correlated and significant to social consciousness with varying degrees of strengths. Additionally, student engagement was positively and moderately correlated to social consciousness while the mediation effects of student engagement on the relationship between each critical components and social consciousness differed. The results of this research indicate the connection between critical components to enhance student engagement and stimulate social consciousness. Implications of these findings elevates the effectiveness of the proposed Service-Learning framework as a catalyst for Service-Learning pedagogy, curriculum development and training programs for community-based programs with some adaptation of SULAM elements to meet current higher educational needs.

ABSTRAK

Pembelajaran Berasaskan Khidmat di Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi Malaysia semakin meningkat dengan perhatian ditumpukan kepada perspektif Pembelajaran Berasaskan Khidmat. Rangka Tindakan Pendidikan Malaysia 2015-2025 untuk pendidikan tinggi telah menekankan pentingnya Pembelajaran Berasaskan Khidmat sebagai kaedah pembelajaran pengalaman dalam reka bentuk program untuk menyampaikan pengalaman pembelajaran positif kepada pelajar sekolah tinggi. Ini termasuk semua modul yang berkaitan dengan komuniti . Inisiatif lain yang dipimpin oleh Kementerian Pendidikan Tinggi untuk menangani Fasa1 Rangka Tindakan Pendidikan Malaysia dengan memperkenalkan *Service-Learning Malaysia - University for Society* (atau SULAM) dengan tumpuan kepada mengintegrasikan keperluan masyarakat dengan akademik . Semua usaha ini menunjukkan penekanan yang kuat kepada penglibatan masyarakat, pelajar dan pembangunan masyarakat. Walau bagaimanapun, penyesuaian Pembelajaran Berasaskan Khidmat di Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi swasta dan tempatan tidak begitu meluas seperti yang diharapkan, membatasi daripada potensi besarnya sebagai pemangkin untuk memenuhi keperluan pendidikan, masyarakat dan pekerjaan. Mekanisme Sastera semakin meningkat dalam Pembelajaran Berasaskan Khidmat dalam konteks Malaysia terutamanya di universiti awam tetapi terhad kepada bagaimana ia boleh mempengaruhi keterlibatan pelajar dan kesedaran sosial secara berkesan dalam proses Pembelajaran . Maklumat ini mengkaji Pembelajaran Berasaskan Khidmat untuk meningkatkan kesedaran sosial pelajar sarjana muda dalam menangani isu-isu sosial bersama komuniti. Penyelidikan ini yang dilaksanakan dalam Matapelajaran Umum (subjek MPU) mendedahkan komponen kritikal yang boleh diidentifikasi untuk dimasukkan ke dalam kursus pembelajaran

perkhidmatan, kurikulum dan latihan sukarelawan untuk graduan yang lebih terlibat yang mempunyai kesedaran sosial. Penyelidikan menggunakan analisis kaedah campuran di mana rangka kerja yang dicadangkan diuji dan dianalisis melalui data kualitatif dan kaedah kuantitatif. Dalam fasa pertama, satu set komponen kritikal telah diidentifikasi sebagai variabel bebas yang digunakan dalam pengkodan. Data kualitatif yang diperoleh melalui analisis kandungan 30 projek berdasarkan pengalaman pelajar. Untuk mengesahkan komponen kritikal ini lebih menonjol daripada perspektif pelajar, wawancara dijalankan dengan perkhidmatan terdahulu pelajar. Fasa kedua kajian ini meneliti tahap setiap komponen kritikal dan hubungannya dengan keterlibatan pelajar serta kesedaran sosial. Analisis kualitatif menunjukkan bahawa semua komponen kritikal penting dengan pengalaman pembelajaran perkhidmatan. Dengan data kuantitatif dari 190 pelajar, analisis deskriptif menggambarkan tahap yang berbeza bagi komponen kritikal dalam pelbagai dimensi yang dikaji. Korelasi Pearson menunjukkan semua hubungan antara komponen kritikal dan penglibatan pelajar adalah positif dan signifikan, dengan kekuatan yang berbeza. Selain itu, semua komponen kritikal berkorelasi positif dengan kesedaran sosial, meskipun pada tahap kekuatan yang berbeza. Penglibatan pelajar juga berkorelasi positif dan sederhana dengan kesedaran sosial, dengan kesan mediasi yang berbeza pada hubungan antara komponen kritikal dan kesedaran sosial. Keseluruhannya, hasil kajian menunjukkan hubungan antara komponen kritikal dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan pelajar dan memupuk kesedaran sosial. Implikasi hasil kajian ini meliputi peningkatan keberkesanan Rangka Kerja Pembelajaran Berasaskan Khidmat, dengan cadangan untuk pembangunan pedagogi, kurikulum, dan program latihan yang berkaitan dengan masyarakat, serta aplikasi elemen SULAM untuk memenuhi keperluan pendidikan tinggi semasa.

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APPROVAL

The Examination Committee has met on **3rd November,2023** to conduct the final examination of **Anita Premila Paul** on her doctoral thesis entitled '**A Service-Learning Framework to enhance Student Engagement and Social Consciousness**'

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

MPU	-	Mata Pelajaran Umum/ General studies
HEIs	-	Higher Education Institutions
SL	-	Service-Learning
MOHE	-	Ministry of Higher Education
SDGs	-	Sustainable Development Goals
SULAM	-	Service Learning University for Society
SICE	-	Social Issues & Community Engagement(an MPU module in Sunway College, Victoria University Program
NGOs	-	Non-governmental Organizations