

## **Nexus Leadership Theory to Practice: Educational Leadership Development Through Service Learning Malaysia - University For Society (Sulam)**

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### **Abstract**

Institutions must take into account the factors that make leadership experiences relevant in order to offer students high-quality leadership opportunities. It is crucial that formal education in leadership theories and principles, real-world experience, and reflection on those experiences in light of formal education constitute a well-rounded trio that makes up leadership education through service learning Malaysia - university for society (SULAM). An effective collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs produces experiences that deepen this discernment, a live laboratory for knowledge acquisition, and the chance for thoughtful insights from fusing theory and practise. This idea is supported by theoretical frameworks in leadership education, experiential learning, and reflection. Experience-based education, or service learning, incorporates real-world situations into the academic curriculum. Constructivism and experiential education, which have contributed to framing service learning as an opportunity for students to apply their knowledge within the community, serve as its theoretical and practical pillars. These pillars include community engagement and the educational advantages of experiential learning. Before identifying the issues associated to such demands, students will first obtain an awareness of the community's needs.

**Keywords:** Educational Leadership Development, Leadership Theory, Service Learning Malaysia, University For Society (SULAM)

### **Introduction**

As leaders in the field of leadership education, Service Learning Malaysia - University For Society (SULAM) aims to give students the chances they need to learn about and develop effective leadership abilities. We'll look at valuable opportunities created by cooperation between student affairs and academic affairs that improve learning through co-curricular and

curricular experiences in leadership education. Opportunities for students to learn about leadership in a meaningful way when combined with education, experience, and reflection are present in these deliberate environments. A course-based, credit-bearing educational experience in which the student engages in a structured service project that addresses identified community needs, reflects on the project and experiences to achieve desired learning outcomes, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the course material, a broader appreciation of the discipline, an improved sense of personal values, and a stronger sense of civic responsibility. By including love, pleasure, and respect for one another, SULAM pedagogy promotes humanistic and value-driven education as the key to bolstering our educational system. High impact educational strategies, such as service learning methodologies, have been increasingly prevalent in recent years (Conway et al., 2009; Celio et al., 2011; Xu et al., 2018; Salam et al., 2019; Bringle & Clayton, 2020). The academic systems around the world have continuously examined their approaches to these activities to examine contextual compatibility, identify the constraints that can limit its use, or recognise similar benefits in other situations in order to produce similar beneficial effects (Butin, 2006; Taylor, 2017). Initiatives to improve service learning have been incorporated into Malaysia's present educational framework since this pedagogical strategy is thought to be the best way to meet the country's educational objectives of creating graduates who are employable (Malaysian Education Blueprint, 2015-2025). The implementation of service learning is at the stage where it needs to be incorporated in a more structured and systematic manner into the academic program (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). Today, institutions across the country are recognised as having this endeavour as their "third mission." As a result, the Ministry of Higher Education has developed SULAM (Service Learning Malaysia - University Society), a set of national standards for the implementation of service-learning at Malaysian universities (Department of Higher Education, 2019). Additionally, other colleges across the nation have developed their own own set of service-learning standards that are seen to be better suited to their particular setting. This supports the findings of the study by Mackenzie, Hinchey, and Cornforth (2019), which further emphasises that service-learning initiatives should be designed to foster a long-term climate of collaboration between the institution and community. Therefore, major efforts should be made to ensure that service learning is properly integrated into the academic curriculum. SULAM has the potential to revolutionise teaching and learning while fostering moral responsibility and a social ethic in the next generation. Previous research from around the world suggested that good student traits include civic engagement, tolerance for difference, the ability to lead, and the development of personal and social skills. SULAM stands for the third mission of the institution, which is to serve society.

### **Literature Reviews**

A strong leadership model for students requires an institution to analyse its campus culture, identify relevant leadership content, and decide the best means to teach and evaluate students' leadership knowledge acquisition and skill development (Kuh, 1995). Understanding the institutional context is critical in determining how to design programmes that promote students' self-awareness and progress. To be successful, each campus should think about how to incorporate both curricular and co-curricular experiences, as well as how the campus culture will influence programme design. We have presented two brief examples to support the proposed idea of developing deliberate environments for leadership education by focusing on Student Affairs and Academic Affairs partnerships that provide chances for

knowledge acquisition, experiences, and reflection. An 18-credit Undergraduate Certificate in Leadership Studies at Florida State University provides a deliberate atmosphere for students to focus on leadership education. The certificate is offered through a collaboration between the Division of Student Affairs' Center for Leadership and Civic Education and the College of Education's Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies. This programme welcomes undergraduate students from all academic fields and college years. A set of five core courses and one elective course provide chances for leadership knowledge and skill development, as well as experience and reflection. First, a theoretical basis is provided, which includes courses on broad leadership theory, skills and theory related to change leadership, and leadership within the context of organisations and communities. Once a theoretical foundation has been formed, experiences where theory can be practised are presented. Preprofessional activities, community service, observation, research, and internship possibilities are examples of possible experiences. Throughout each course, structured reflection is delivered through a variety of modalities such as class discussions, journal writing, reflective essays, video blogging, and group presentations. An atmosphere in which leadership learning can be fully explored is produced by developing a seamless education through both curricular and co-curricular activities, knowledge acquisition, experiences, and reflection. The Illinois Leadership Center is a collaboration between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Students are involved in a range of curricular and co-curricular leadership development initiatives, workshops, and courses at the Center. The Leadership Certificate programme is one such example. Unlike at Florida State University, the Leadership Certificate programme at Illinois does not appear on students' transcripts. Instead, students enrol in two elective leadership courses given across disciplines, participate in four separate one to three day leadership programmes, two out-of-classroom group or team experiences, and create a personal development plan with two self-improvement goals. While the certificate programme focuses on 11 skills and traits, the personal development plan outlines two specific abilities or attributes on which students should concentrate. Throughout the programme, students meet one-on-one with a leadership coach who helps them achieve their self-improvement objectives. To conclude their experience, students compile reflections in a leadership portfolio to document their leadership development. The portfolio might consist of actual papers or electronic formats such as a blog, presentation, or website. Through reflection and actual creation, the portfolio building becomes an experience in and of itself. Students in this programme learn about leadership, practise leadership skills, and document their progress through written reflection and active dialogues with their leadership coach. These two universities provide examples of how to weave leadership theory and reflection throughout a student's experience, resulting in stronger, more in-depth learning. Strong collaborations between Student Affairs and Academic Affairs create a fluid learning environment in which students can receive valuable leadership experience. Opportunities for leadership knowledge acquisition, practical application of leadership abilities and information, and reflection on experiences in light of education are all present in these relationships. When schools actively design environments that integrate theory, practise, and reflection, student experiences are enhanced and learning is expanded.

**Findings/Results**

Data was collected from targeted academic staff working in Malaysian public universities, using judgemental sampling method. 500 questionnaires were distributed to

selected public universities. 247 students responded to the survey, resulting in a 49.4 percent response rate. Table 2 is conclude all of the demographic data from the respondents consisting of gender, age, marital status, level of education and working experiences. From 150 respondents, the result show that female respondent (56%) is more than male respondent (44%).

### **Overview of Data Gathered**

Table 1 shows the pattern profile of the questionnaires. A total of one hundred fifty questionnaires have been allotted to the respondents. All one hundred fifty questionnaires have been collected and the data was key in evaluation inside the research. After that, all of the questionnaires that have been distributed is satisfactorily finished and finally examined by Statistical package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software program.

Table 1

#### *Sample Profile of Survey*

Number of Questionnaires Distributed	150
Number of Questionnaires Collected Back	150
Response Rate	100%
Number of Questionnaires Used for Analysis	150

### **Data Presentation**

Table 2 is conclude all of the demographic data from the respondents consisting of gender, age, marital status, level of education. From 150 respondents, the result show that female respondent (56%) is more than male respondent (44%).

Table 2

*Demographic Characteristics of Respondents*

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	66	44.0
	Female	84	56.0
Age	Under 18	19	12.7
	18-24	58	38.7
	25-34	38	25.3
	35-more	35	25.3
Marital Status	Single	108	72.0
	Widowed	12	8.0
	Separated	2	1.3
	Divorced	6	4.0
	Married	22	14.7
Level of Education	Ph.D.	10	6.7
	Master	28	18.7
	Bachelor Degree	32	21.3
	Diploma Qualification		
	SPM	24	16.0
	STPM	25	16.7
		30	20.0

Almost all of 150 respondents aged between 18 – 25 years old (38.7%) and the rest is under 18 years old (12.7%), 25 – 34 years old (25.3%) and 35 years old and more (23.3%). A total of 108 (72.0%) respondents were still single and the rest is widowed (8.0%), separated (1.3%), divorced (4.0%), and married (22.0%). For level of education, 10 (6.7%) were from PhD, 28 (18.7%) graduated with Master Qualification, 32 (21.3%) graduated with Bachelor Degree qualification, 24 (16.0%) graduated from Diploma qualification, 25 (16.7%) has SPM qualification and 30 (20.0%) has STPM qualification. Workplace issues related to sex and gender have not been empirically evaluated in the servant leadership literature. Several scholars have examined sex differences for other leadership constructs with mixed results (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Eagly & Karau, 1991). Others have tested sex differences for full range leadership behaviors (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Barbuto, Fritz, Matkin, & Marx, 2007), leader-member exchange relationships (Pelled & Xin, 2000), and sources of work motivation (Barbuto & Gifford, 2008). Other studies have used dispositional, biological and psychological variables in comparative examinations of male and female gender role leadership behaviors (Eagly & Carli, 2004). Barbuto et al (2007) investigated the use of influence tactics and found that less educated female leaders used more pressure influence tactics than less educated male leaders although difference weakened with increased education. Social role theory suggested that individuals would behave in accordance with preconceived notions about the roles that individuals occupy (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Categorically, individuals, who can be classified into defined roles, will adjust behaviors based upon the norms of that role. Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt, and Engen (2003) argued that leaders tend to simultaneously conform to the defined roles both within an organizational hierarchy and within societal gender roles. Gender roles refer to “shared expectations (about appropriate qualities and behaviors) that apply to individuals on the basis of their socially

identified gender” (Eagly, 1987). Within the context of social role theory, females have largely been considered to fulfill more supportive and interpersonal roles whereas males are considered more likely to fulfill functional roles such as the primary breadwinner and negotiator (Eagly, 1987). Gender roles have an implicit manifestation in the functionality of an organization (Gutek & Morasch, 1982). Gender roles and stereotypes have been a widely researched topic (Quinn, Macrae, & Bodenhausen, 2007). Research has generalized that most individuals possess assumptions that are biased by gender specific stereotypes (Ely, 1995). This means that certain behaviors are expected based on the gender of leaders and followers. While this pattern of assumptions has been confirmed, the research that would warrant these assumptions has produced mixed results (Barbuto et al., 2007; Eagly et al., 2003; Eagly & Johnson, 1990). This has led to a call for research testing the socialized aspects of gender specific behaviors, which led to differentiations between agentic and communal gender role behaviors (Eagly, 1987).

### Reliability Analysis

The table 3 is about Cronbach alpha that will get from the result of independent variable which is personal appearances, interpersonal communication skill, personality, interview preparation and follow up. The Cronbach’s alpha has a coefficient values for all elements that ranged from 0.776 to 0.860 which mean it is correct for every factor. Sekaran (1992) “defined that the reliability of a degree is mounted by means of testing for consistency and balance of information accrued”.

Table 3

#### *Results of Reliability Test*

Variables	Number of Items	Items Dropped	Items Recoded	Cronbach Alpha
Ethics and professionalism	4	-	-	.826
Interpersonal Communication Skill	4	-	-	.776
Personality	5	-	-	.831
Problem-solving Teamwork skills	4	-	-	.860
Leadership, autonomy and responsibility	5	-	-	.789

Information consistency indicates the measurement whether it is independently measured of concept. Goodness of information were measured by using reliability evaluation. To make sure that each one items utilized in every variable are prevented from any kind of mistakes and as a consequence, giving a constant results. According to Sekaran (2000), “alpha over 0.80 is taken into consideration suitable, while range of 0.70 is taken into consideration acceptable”.

The findings of the study establish that:

a) Introducing the course on Personality Development and Communication Skills in the SULAM curriculum proved to be a very desired and important decision.

- b) It also becomes evident that the course has quite positively affected the personality and social skills of the recipients. However, learning oral and written communication skills needs further time and efforts on the students' part.
- c) The respondents repeatedly mentioned in the suggestions section that there must be more emphasis on practicing of all the skills, and it should be offered in the final academic year too for further learning.
- d) It appeared that there is little SULAM projects available on the subject and more, in-depth research is needed on the state of personality and communication skills of the LIS professionals, particularly in Malaysia.
- e) This study may be raise awareness regarding the need of offering such course in other developing countries where social and educational setups are more or less the same.

### **Conclusion & Suggestions**

Findings of this study shows that developing students' teamwork skills in the classroom is a long process and far more challenging than was expected. Compared to traditional lectures, such a SULAM can provide a positive environment for students to practice, improve, and develop their teamwork skills. The results of this study revealed that students' decision to take part in the SULAM was driven mostly by their demand for connection and achievement. It is advised that programme managers and teachers regularly review the program's academic component to make sure it remains applicable to students' lives while also pushing them to achieve high levels of academic performance. Additionally, it is advised that programme coordinators and teachers make sure the co-curricular component of the curriculum and the characteristics of residence life stay pertinent and strongly emphasise the value of a sense of belonging. Future marketing campaigns for this programme should emphasise both its intellectual and social components to help students understand that by taking part in it, their desires for achievement and affiliation may be addressed. It is advised that a smaller university conduct a comparable assessment to see whether a similar programme should be affiliated with it. Because of the scale of the school where the survey was conducted, it's possible that remarks about the need for affiliation were more about the university's size than the necessity for affiliation itself. Although it was outside the purview of this study, the researchers advise looking at the key motives in light of particular demographic traits. Are men more driven by one of the needs than women to participate in the SULAM, for instance. The desire for power did not seem to be the primary driver behind joining the SULAM. It is advised that more research be done to ascertain whether this was actually caused by the Leadership Identity Development Model stage participants were at when they first started college and the SULAM. The similarity of the programme to their prior experiences, their belief that the programme would be fun or interesting, and the need for on-campus housing would have emerged as three additional theme areas, in addition to the three needs already covered in this paper, had the researchers analysed the responses using an inductive lens. To investigate these additional demands, the experts advise conducting more research. This study used the Acquired Needs Theory to identify the main drivers of why students desired to take part in a voluntary, residential leadership learning community.

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