Community Service: A Case Study in the Faculty of Business Management, UiTM Pahang

Musramaini Mustapha
Nor Hidayatun Abdul Razak
Suhanom Mohd Zaki

ABSTRACT

Most of the students tend to participate in community services because they enjoy being in the program or they are asked to participate even though without their concern on the effect of community services activity to their own personal feelings, values and experiences in achieving a better standard in what they do in life. The purpose of this paper is to explore the experience and knowledge about community service activity among the low grade students. Besides that, the researchers would like to identify the attitudes and perceptions of the low grade students on the community service learning module as part of the requirements in their academic program. The Community Service-Learning Attitudes and Perceptions Scale (CSLAPS) was used to analyze the data. The findings showed that those students tended to participate in community services because of their interest on that programme itself and for their career development. This information could be used by the academia to address students' tendency to get involved in community service activities as one of academic programmes to enhance their learning experience.

Keywords: *attitudes, Community Service-Learning, perceptions, community services*

Introduction

Community service starts from volunteer based activities. According to Oxford Online Dictionary (2012) it is "voluntary work intended to help people in a particular area: opportunities to engage in community service". Referring to the definition, it sounds that only one side of people are benefited. In other perspective, the groups of people who deliver community service are able to understand the problems faced by the other persons in our community and with their helping hands considered able to help to release someone burden. By engaging in community activities, universities students could convey a very good message in order to help the societies. Fakulti Pengurusan Perniagaan (FPP), UiTM Pahang consistently organizes community service activities to get engaged with university's external customers such as parents, nearest primary and secondary schools, non government agencies and institutions. Due to that reason, Plan Do Check & Action (PDCA) Committee from FPP UiTM Pahang has derived community service activities for low grade business faculty students. This committee was established in Julai 2008, it is responsible to set up activities for business students who acquired the CGPA grade below 2.30. Commonly, it is become one of the practices by FPP UiTM Pahang to help the unexcelled business faculty students by letting them involve with outdoor and motivational activities. Furthermore, this committee started to organize community service activity for every semester since 2009. One of the missions is to organize community service activities and let the unexcelled business faculty students participate in the whole project. By participating in community service, those participants involved tend to have the responsibility towards the societies. Not only that, the community service could be used as a tool to groom the better students' attitude and leadership skills.

Problem Statement

Many research conducted previously focused on the community service and community service learning contribution towards the students' improvement such as in self-confidence, communication skills, attitudes and behaviours, and others (Astin & Sax, 1998); (Tucker et al 1998); (Hart & Donnelly, 2007). Instead of organizing motivational program for academic purpose, community service is one of the programs that require less academic successful students to participate. The issues are whether those participants have the knowledge on community service based activities. Besides that, in order to help the communities, a study needs to be carried out to explore the factors which motivate students to enrol in community service engagement as part of their

academic credit or otherwise. Most of the community service activities are focusing on the value that could be developed in students' attitudes and behaviours through the process of handling the community service activities. The community service activities can be considered as a burden to those who participate in that program or such an alternate tool to improve their academic achievement.

Literature Review

Students and community service activities

Students' involvement in community service activities is very common in universities. Universities authorities usually encourage students to participate in the activities as part of their corporate social responsibility. Students on the other hand may join the activities persuaded by friends or some of them are truly interested in these kinds of activities and take it as a pleasure for helping the community (Mustapha et al, 2011). Students may understand that community service activities will require them to help others to improve the condition of the community surrounding them (Scafidi, 2007). The backgrounds of the family members or the society in which they belong with could be part of the reasons for them to participate in the activities voluntarily. With the early exposure on the community service activities, students will develop good value in their attitudes and characters that could further influence them to handle life rationally and thoughtfully.

Students with good values and attitudes will always find success in life by which even though they may not excel in education but they may excel in self-motivation. Through their participation in community services, students are exposed to different kinds of situations such as having to deal with disabilities people, poor and sick people, homeless, and uneducated people. Through their observation and involvement in helping these people, it will influence them to think of what and how they should do if they are in the same situation. Students may motivate themselves to improve their own conditions by changing their current attitudes and behaviours. With regular exposure on the community service activities, students may develop tendencies to participate not only "serve to learn" but also "learn to serve" (Bringle & Hatcher, 2009) through their community service activities. Students could learn to improve their condition by looking at others' situations and at the same time learn to serve them well. This will create a win-win situation between the students and the communities. With different types of activities involved, students may experience different way of helping others.

Community service activities offer many types of activities such as clean up elderly care home, charity sale for fund raising, volunteer for homeless shelter, recycling, walkathon and marathon, children tutor, plant a community garden and volunteer at a youth centre. Some activities are joint venture activities between universities, schools and other organisations that require students to create networking and relationship with many people. Whether the students acknowledge or not, they actually gain a lot of benefits in creating networking by joining the community service activities. Their interest in community service activities are not only for the sake of the needy but also for their own benefits. Even if the activities are compulsory for them to join, their involvement will benefit them in many ways in terms of psychology, social and cognitive (Michigan University, 2012).

Psychologically, community service activities help students to value life better through the experience of helping others. Students may feel happy and satisfied for reducing others' burden. They will also develop positive feeling in the sense of self-motivating by encouraging others to stay positive through the challenges that happen in life. Thoits & Hewitt (2001) state that by being a member of any voluntary association, it could help in reducing psychological stress. Students will feel good every time they help others and as mentioned in Current Health Magazine through the survey done by the Prudential Insurance Company, 89% of youngsters were involved in volunteering because it made them feel good. Just like the other exercise activities that could reduce stress and tense, community service activities also involve physical activities that require students not only to use their physical strengths to do the activities but also require them to use their mental to think on how to further help those needy to have a better life. Through community service activities, students could develop networking or social relationship with the community members. They have to foster the relationship to make sure the activities participated could run smoothly. They have to communicate with community leaders, organization leaders and other community members during the community service activities to get instruction or to give

instruction and also during the meeting and discussion on the community service activities from the start until the end of the activities. By doing this, indirectly they could improve their skills in critical, interpersonal skills, knowledge of people from different races and cultures; and the understanding of problems facing the community and the nation (Astin & Sax, 1998).

Cognitively students learn more about life, social responsibility, solving problem skill through their experience in the community service activities. Students are trained to think out of the box as what is happening in the surrounding and how to survive based on that surrounding. Their mind will keep on thinking of the way to escape from the situation and by participating in various aspects of community differences; they gain many information that could be used to solve the situations. Students may use the same thinking skill to solve their academic problem for better achievement. As Duffy et al (2010) states many studies indicated improvement in academic achievement and cognitive skill is done through the community service learning. Community Service Learning is a very useful method in teaching and learning about the community service activities. Students could use the classroom curriculum and practise it with the services offered to the community that contribute to students' self-reflection and the need of the community from various backgrounds (Jackson, 2012). By having community service learning, the objective of having a win-win situation between the community and the students' improvement in academic could be achieved. Students who are not quite excellent in academic may find community service learning as a way to motivate them to accept their weaknesses, but not to pity themselves for those weaknesses. In community service learning, students will be taught about the responsibilities. Students will have specific outcomes from the activities they are involving. Therefore they do not participate in any community activities just for the sake of participation without gaining any other benefits or just for self satisfaction and for fun.

Masih Ada Yang Sayang (MAYS 4)

"MAYS 4" organised by PDCA Committees, (FPP), UiTM Pahang at Rumah Amal Curahan Kasih Sayang Ikhwan, Temerloh, Pahang on February 18,2012. This committee consistently arrange one community service activity for every semester. One of the researchers, PDCA Committees said in the early semester, they will have a meeting to set up the community service activity. The community service activity must involve the business faculty students that listed in their committees' mentee. The objective of the activity is to get the low performance business faculty students to engage with external communities. The "MAYS 4" is handled at one of non government organization (NGO) that involved in orphans management. There are different slots in that programme such as group work with those orphans, "Gotong royong" and "nasyid". Basically, the experiences with orphans could affect their emotion because not every one has a family or if they have family maybe their family are not able to take care of them. The session that let them sit together to share their problems experiences is very good because it is able to make them feel worth by spending their time with the orphans.

Methodology

This research was conducted at a program "MASIH ADA YANG SAYANG (MAYS 4)" organized by PDCA Committee, FPP UiTM Pahang. This study involved 30 students from Part 3 Diploma in Business Studies and Diploma in Banking. All the students participated in that program automatically were chosen to be the respondents for this research. Questionnaires distributed to the respondents include 4 sections which are factual measurements about previous experience and knowledge of community service and Community Service-Learning, attitudinal and perception items about previous experience and knowledge of community service and Community Service-Learning and students' demographic. Those perception and attitude instruments are self monitored from Bender and Jordaan (2007) using simple attitude scaling and likert scale from 1 - "I strongly agree" until 5 - "I strongly disagree". According to Mahmud (2009), simple attitude scaling requires individual to agree or disagree with the statement. The number of questions for perception and attitude instruments can be referred to Table 1. In this study, the researchers used two types of analysis, frequencies and descriptive statistics. The data for this study were analyzed using SPSS version 20.

Table 1: Research Instruments

Variables	Number of Questions	Source
Perception and Attitude	8	Bender and Jordaan (2007)

Findings and Discussion

This study focused on the students' previous experience and knowledge, perceptions and attitutes towards the community service learning. Based on the table 2 below, regarding the experience on community service, almost half of respondents said yes i.e. 46.7% had previous experience with community service, meanwhile 53.3% of respondents previously had no experience with community service. 23.3% of the respondents are currently participating in community service and the activity is focusing on the co-curricular activities. Another 76.7% of respondents do not engage with it. This means respondents are currently lack of involvement in community service as a way out to focus on their academic achievement or reason for not participating in any community service activities. However, on the question of whether they would like to do community service related to respondent training programs, majority 83.3% said yes to the question and 16.7% were against it. This respond could be due to their understanding if they participate in community service activities, they could enhance their skill and gain benefits towards their academic achievement through upgrading motivation. Surprisingly, on the question on whether they would like to do community service for academic credit that focuses on the curricular, the percentage shows that 56.7% agreed to get involved and 43.3% did not agree. More than half of the respondents in this program agreed to have community service inverted as their academic credit. Furthermore, 76.7% of the total respondent agreed to follow the community service if it becomes the module/course and only 26.3% did not agree with it. It is proven they are very excited to involve in community service activity because only 26.7% of them attended module/course and majority of them, 73.3% did not have previous experience attended at the program. Besides that, respondents have also been asked about their knowledge in service learning. 93.3% answered yes and balance of 6.7% answered no. Most of the respondents do have concern on service to community. The last question is regarding respondent's motivation towards enrolment for a course/module which includes community service. The main reason is due to one of the community service components in which 96.7% of respondent agreed and only 3.3% against it. Although the group of respondents in this survey came from low grade academic achievement, but they still insisted to help the community if they are given the opportunity to do that. The second reason is most of the respondents were interested with the community service module at 93.3% and only 6.7% of them were not interested. More interestingly, 73.3% of the total respondents were interested to make community service as their career/future plans and balance 26.7% were not interested to make as their future engagement. 60% of the total respondents agreed to make community service as their module/course requirements and 40% did not agree with that. The lowest reason that motivate respondents to engage with community service is due to the academic credit stated only 40% of the agreed, 56.7% did not agree and 3.3% is missing data. Out of 5 reasons that motivate respondents to get enrolled with course/module that includes community service is because of the community service component itself. It is shown that most of the respondents are interested to get involved in community service activity as their contribution to the society.

Table 2: Factual measurements about previous experience and knowledge of community service and Community Service-Learning

Experience and Participation	Response(N)	Percentage(%)
Previous community service experience	Yes, 14	46.7
	No, 16	53.3
Current participation in community service (co-curricular).	Yes, 7	23.3
	No, 23	76.7
Would you like to do community service related to student training programmers? (curricular)	Yes, 25	83.3
	No, 5	16.7
Would you like to do community service for academic credit? (curricular)	Yes, 17	56.7
	No, 13	43.3
Would you like to enroll for course/module with community service?	Yes, 23	76.7
	No, 7	26.3
Have you been enrolled for a course/module with community service?	Yes, 8	26.7
	No, 22	73.3
Have you heard of Service-Learning before?	Yes ,28	93.3
	No, 2	6.7
Primary reason that would motivate enrolment for a course/module which includes community service:		
1) Academic credit	Yes, 12	40
	No, 17	56.7
	Missing, 1	3.3
2) Module/course requirements	Yes, 18	60
	No, 12	40
3) Interest in module	Yes, 28	93.3
	No, 2	6.7
4) Community service component	Yes, 29	96.7
	No, 1	3.3
5) Career/future plans	Yes, 22	73.3
	No, 8	26.7

The second objective of this paper is to explore the effect of community learning services towards participants in terms of their perceptions and attitudes. Based on the table 3 below, attitudinal and perception measured through likert scale 1 – strongly agree to 5 - strongly disagree. Based on the first attitudinal and perception towards community service experience, 36% of the respondents agreed and 6.7% strongly agreed that they have experience in community service previously and 20% of them strongly disagreed and 16.7% disagreed with the statement. This means, the respondents were involved with community service activity previously. Currently, most of the respondents are not engaged with community service activity as the findings showed 36.7% for not related, 30% of them agreed and 3.3% of them strongly agreed. Only 30% (agreed and strongly agreed) of total respondents currently participated in community service. The impressive result derived from the answer 46.7% of respondents agreed to have training in community service activity and 16.7% of them strongly agreed. Only 20% answered not related and 16.7% disagreed with it. The respondents agreed to have training program involve with community service, but majority of them did not agree to have community service as their academic credit. It was shown by 36.7% answered not related, 13.3% disagreed, 10% are strongly disagreed only 40% of total respondents agreed to have it. Although most of the respondents were not interested with academic credit but they were interested to join community service module/course. It was shown by the high percentage of the response agreed at 43.3% and 23.3% strongly agreed, only 20% answered not related, 10% disagreed and 3.3% strongly disagreed. Meanwhile, for the reason that motivate them to join as community service component, it showed the high percentage on agreed at 40% and strongly agreed at 36.7%. It indicates that the respondents were interested to join community service as one of the components of the activity. Besides that, only 16.7% stated not related, followed by 3.3% for disagreed and strongly disagreed. More than half of the respondents chose the reason to motivate them in community service enrolment towards career/future plans.46.7% agreed and 10% strongly agreed with the intentions towards career/future plans, the balance of 23.3% said not related, 10% disagreed and strongly disagreed.

Table 3: Attitudinal and perception items about previous experience and knowledge of community service and Community Service-Learning

Attitudinal and perception	Strongly agree	Agree	Not related	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Previous community service experience	6.7%(2)	36.7%(11)	16.7%(5)	16.7%(5)	20%(6)
Current participation in community service (co-curricular).	3.3%(1)	30%(9)	36.7%(11)	20%(6)	10%(3)
Would you like to do community service related to student training programmers? (curricular)	16.7%(5)	46.7%(14)	20%(6)	16.7%(5)	-
Would you like to do community service for academic credit? (curricular)	-	40%(12)	36.7%(11)	13.3%(4)	10%(3)
Would you like to enroll for course/module with community service?	23.3%(7)	43.3%(13)	20%(6)	10%(3)	3.3%(1)
Have you been enrolled for a course/module with community service?	-	33.3%(10)	26.7%(8)	26.7%(8)	13.3%(4)
Have you heard of Service-Learning before?	30%(9)	47.6%(14)	13.3%(4)	10%(3)	-

Primary reason that would motivate enrolment for a course/module which includes community service:					
1) Academic credit	-	36.7%(11)	33.3%(10)	16.7%(5)	10% (3)
2) Module/course requirements	10%(3)	30%(9)	36.7%(11)	20%(6)	3.3%(1)
3) Interest in module	33.3%(10)	46.7%(14)	10%(3)	6.7%(2)	3.3%(1)
4) Community service component	36.7%(11)	40%(12)	16.7%(5)	3.3%(1)	3.3%(1)
5) Career/future plans	10%(3)	46.7%(14)	23.3%(7)	10%(3)	10%(3)

Table 4 below shows that respondents' age categorize into 4 groups. Majority of the respondents was 19 years old and below at 53.3%, followed by 36.7% from 20 – 21 years old, 6.7% from 22 – 23 years old and only 3.3% above than 24 years old. Most of the respondents were female at 73.3% and the balance 26.7% was male. Since the program was organized for business faculty students, only 2 programs involved which are 76.7% is Diploma in Business Studies students (BM111) and 23.3% is Diploma In Banking students (BM112).

Table 4: Respondents demographic

Demographic Profiles		Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Age	19 years old and below	16	53.3
	20 - 21 years old	11	36.7
	22 - 23 years old	2	6.7
	24 years and above	1	3.3
Gender	Female	22	73.3
	Male	8	26.7
Program	DBS (BM111)	23	76.7
	DIB (BM112)	7	23.3

Conclusion

This article presents the results of the students' perceptions and attitudes towards the community service learning. It is a case study of reflection towards their self-motivation and attitudes in community service engagement activities. Previous research mainly focus on general students perceptions and attitudes towards the community service learning whereby this research is focusing on the perceptions and attitudes on community service learning among the business faculty low grade students. The limitation in this study is the sample of respondents only came from Faculty of Business Management. In future research, the different faculty unexcelled academic students will be taken as respondents. The article stated that many of the students agree to participate if the community service activities become part of the curriculum. Students' involvement in community service activities promoted self-confident; increase interpersonal skills; develop social networking; exposure to real life challenges and options. They could learn better about surviving in the real world through the experience they gain during the activities. They learn about decision making and difficulty in life without knowledge and education. They may value themselves better through their observation on other peoples' life. Therefore, community service-learning program is very important to be developed as part of the curriculum-based for university students to foster their knowledge, skill and maturity in joining the real life survival.

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MUSRAMAINI MUSTAPHA, NOR HIDAYATUN ABDUL RAZAK, SUHANOM MOHD ZAKI.
Universiti Teknologi MARA Pahang. musramaini@pahang.uitm.edu.my, norhidayatun@pahang.uitm. edu.my, suhanom@pahang.uitm.edu.my.