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High School Graduates' Perspectives on Employment and Service Learning

Diane Deloris Ricketts
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Walden University

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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by

Diane Ricketts

MHS, Walden University, 2018

MSC, International College of the Cayman Islands, 2016

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Human and Social Services

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Abstract

Service learning is a combination of academic study and community service. Service learning is becoming increasingly popular throughout the world. The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perspectives of high school graduates on the effectiveness of the role of service learning and employment postgraduation in the Cayman Islands. Experiential learning theory served as a guiding conceptual framework for this study. Interviews with open-ended questions were conducted with 7 participants who graduated from a prominent high school in the Cayman Islands within the last 4 years. The participants were between ages 18 and 25 and recruited through purposive sampling strategy. Themes were generated using thematic data analysis, which involves multiple steps to develop the themes from the interviewees. The findings revealed that the participants experienced a sense of accomplishment, which is a perfect model both for academic and personal goals. Key results from the study illustrated that service learning impact on student outcomes is immense and perceived as a valuable component in securing employment. The findings from this study of service learning may be applied in developing students' independence through authentic experiences that may have a permanent impact on their lives in encouraging them to be active in creating positive social change.

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Dedication

Finally, I dedicate this project to my husband, Robert: For the past eight years, you fell asleep on the couch watching me do this work, without a murmur or complaint. That is amazing love, and I know I cannot repay you and our son Raget for the devotion and helpfulness you honored me with as I journeyed to this propitious moment. Robert, you have fulfilled the role of husband with distinction. Even with all the additional responsibilities, you never protested—though admittedly you often had good reason—but rather supported me to the end. You listened attentively even when you did not know the full story; what mattered was that you listened. Thank you for being my champion; I will forever love and care for you. My son, who has matured so fast, took control of his education so that the required help from Mom was minimal. I love you, my son, and I share this achievement with you and Dad and will forever cherish the sacrifices you both made. I promise with all my heart to return your selfless gifts in like manner and running over.

I similarly dedicate this dissertation to my late mom Hillary Hamilton, who fought the good fight to clear the pathway for my education, although she herself did not finish primary school. Great fight, Mother; I sought always to hold your ideals high and to make you proud. I know it would be a joy for you, Mother, as well, to know that I have also dedicated this project to your only living sister, Mrs. Gloria Powell. This project is for you, dear aunt, who left the country as a young girl to make life better for all of us. You taught me how to have faith, to love, and to be me, and most of all, you offered a

shoulder to cry on when the road got bumpy. Auntie, I love you dearly, and you will never be replaced in my heart.

This project is also dedicated to my sisters Kaye, Paulette, Jennifer, Bev, and Junie, and my brothers, Carlington, Damian, and Roger; all my nieces and nephews; my cousins and dear friends Ansurd, John, Sheila, Dotty, Cashema, Althea, Irvin, Donet, Carlene, and Joshua.

This project is dedicated to you all. Thank you all for assisting me in gaining the requisite experiences, education, and training that has broadened my capacity for a life of service. I pledge that I will pay this debt forward, as I strive to be an agent for social change.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables	v
List of Figures	vi
Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study.....	1
Background	3
Problem Statement	4
Purpose of the Study	6
Research Questions	7
Conceptual Framework.....	7
Nature of the Study	8
Definitions.....	10
Assumptions.....	11
Scope and Delimitations	12
Limitations	12
Significance.....	14
Summary	15
Chapter 2: Literature Review	17
Literature Search Strategy.....	20
Theoretical Foundation	21
Service-Learning Literature Review.....	23
Historical Foundation of Service Learning.....	24
Educational Journey of Service Learning.....	24

Growth of Service Learning.....	26
Connecting Service Learning to Student Activities.....	28
Service Learning and Experience	30
Service Learning and Curriculum.....	30
Service Learning and Engagement	31
Postgraduation and Service Learning	32
Students' Perceptions of Service Learning.....	33
Global Perspectives on Service Learning	35
International Learning Experiences	36
Service Learning in Higher Education.....	37
Experiential Learning Versus Traditional Learning	39
Service Learning and Employability	40
Students' Attitudes and Service Learning.....	43
Development of Skills and Service Learning	43
Outcome of Service Learning	45
Service Learning and Social Responsibility	46
Comparative Analysis of Service Learning in Disciplines.....	48
Summary and Conclusions	53
Chapter 3: Research Method.....	56
Research Method and Design	56
Methodology	57
Role of Researcher	60

Data Collection	62
Instrument	62
Sampling and Sampling Procedures	64
Participants.....	64
Data Analysis	65
Reliability and Validity.....	68
Credibility	69
Confirmability.....	70
Ethical Procedures	72
Summary	74
Chapter 4: Results	76
Settings.....	76
Presentation of the Findings.....	77
Demographics	77
Data Collection	77
Evidence of Trustworthiness.....	81
Credibility	82
Dependability	82
Transferability.....	83
Confirmability.....	83
Data Analysis	83
Codes, Categories, and Themes	85

Results	
Theme 1: Partnerships With the Community Is Critical.....	88
Theme 2: Developing Social and Leadership Skills Facilitates Student Development	90
Theme 3: Service-Based Projects are Educational	92
Theme 4: Service Learning Builds Career and Networking Opportunities in the Community	95
Summary	98
Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations.....	100
Interpretation of the Findings.....	100
Interpretation of Findings in the Context of the Theory of Experiential Learning	105
Limitations of the Study.....	106
Recommendations.....	107
Implications of Social Change	109
Conclusion	112
References.....	114
Appendix A: Interview Questions	171

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics 77

Table 2. Themes, Meaning, and Example Evidence..... 87

List of Figures

Figure 1. Themes flow chart 86

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Schools across the world are implementing service learning into their curricula, which allows students to emerge in the complexities of how we make sense of ourselves and the people around us (Winans-Solis, 2014). Service learning in postsecondary education began in the 1960s with a work study program (Kalles & Ryan, 2015). It continued to gain popularity in the 1990s and was then integrated in higher education in response to calls for transformation in education distribution in society (Bassis, 2015). With increased interest in service learning, students from the classroom were invited to have direct contact with community members to increase their cognitive development (Black & Greenfield, 2019; Edgerton, 1995). Partnerships through service learning have been embedded in pedagogical learning and have provided mutual benefits for both stakeholders and students, who emerge from these projects prepared for employment opportunities globally (Turner & Winterton, 2019). The value of teacher collaboration, especially exposing students to industry trends and ways to improve skills, are linkages to academic development. It has been the known design for teachers to provide the most significant value in academia for students globally (Fink, 2013).

Effective teaching of a service-learning component course provides participants with educational experiences combined with reflections to enrich the learning experiences (William, 2016). Students must be trained to actively transform knowledge in relevant settings (Rosenkranz, 2012). Service learning enriches the individual opportunity to tackle issues in society and motivates learners to cultivate an environment of community engagement (Glazier et al., 2017). The use of service learning combined

with community service can hone leadership skills transferable to individual full-time employment (Gordon & Gordon, 2017).

Critiquing and analyzing these skill sets can strengthen an employee's confidence in corporate or private settings (Gordon & Gordon, 2017). This type of collaboration is beneficial for both community organizations and academic programs implemented by institutions (Watson & Ripley, 2013). Engaging in different activities in the community is vital beyond degree completion; it assists with social and civic responsibilities and employability, which is increasingly essential to employers (Harrison & Grant, 2016). Students must understand postgraduation anxiety and lack of employment opportunities that demand networking skills, which is prudent to the real world and enables students to pursue their academic careers (Matthews et al., 2015). Shuptrine (2013) highlighted the problem of career readiness in the past and suggested that community learning is desirable, and students must interact with peers through various media that schools provide, such as discussion groups and working creatively and collaboratively in the community in a wide range of social and cultural contexts. This kind of learning will prepare graduates for life beyond studies, providing a positive attitude, employable skills, and ability to problem solve, which may produce a more diverse and prepared workforce (Hollister et al., 2017).

In this chapter, I provide the background exploring the role of service learning and employment. I describe the role of service learning in high schools with graduates' perceptions of the level of preparedness for future careers. Dewey's (1938) experiential learning theory (ELT) was used as the theoretical framework in this study. The nature of

this study includes the methodology, the strategy, target population, and relevant definitions in this study. This section is followed by assumptions, the scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study.

Background

The U.S. Census Bureau (2012) predicted a shift in service learning; demographic changes are occurring and the United States will see a drastic decline of White youth enrolling in K–12 schools, projecting to fall to 20 million by the year 2060, from 64% to 44%. These changes raise pedagogical issues in the field of service learning (Palmon et al., 2015). As service learning moves into academia, it is unclear how administrators will welcome this new venture that in the past was viewed as a cocurricular practice (Butin, 2006). Advocates for service learning are determined to institutionalize service learning in higher education. In the last few years, as service-learning practice and philosophy have reached critical mass, the focus has shifted, and plans have been put into place to ensure sustainability (Butin, 2006). Service-learning courses require interactions from outside the classroom, and educators face challenges in assisting students in focusing on the relevant issues and avoiding distractions during the learning process. Students may become frustrated on the amount of time required of service learning and fail to recognize the usefulness of this learning opportunity (Kwang-Sing et al., 2017).

Within higher education, the movement toward service learning became a significant presence, and more than 950 colleges and universities are committed to the civic purposes of learning in higher education (Butin, 2006). Administrators who engage students in this practice believe it is not just necessary in schools, but they also have

embraced this type of knowledge as a talent assessment manifested in experiential education. Through service learning, individuals are equipped with self-knowledge and become lifelong learners while creating a link between theory and practice (Allen-Mastro, 2019).

Chang et al.'s (2014) findings revealed that the knowledge an individual gains through the education process does not exemplify service learning without accepting that both the community and education institutions must work together in building lasting partnerships. Through service learning, pedagogy educators can connect learning into the community (Rutti et al., 2016). Service learning gives educators an opportunity to explore teachers' knowledge while using this method to transform young people's educational experiences in the workplace (Harriman, 2015). Furthermore, Harriman (2015) noted that this element is used to address complex issues in the community while ensuring that each student is equipped and trained in various organizations, which provides a substantial impact on the student's ability to adapt to the workforce.

Problem Statement

Service learning helps students be better prepared and engaged in society (Rutti et al., 2016). The lack of service learning can negatively affect employment, which negatively impacts the economy (Young & Karme, 2015). Service learning may remove barriers that exist between learning institutions and public and private organizations (Wylie, 2014).

Currently, there is a national debate over whether students with high school degrees are prepared for employment and whether their level of perceived preparedness

matches the expectations of employers (Grasgreen, 2014). Service learning benefits youth in their ability and capacity to seek out viable employment. Service learning enables students to demonstrate better critical thinking and increase their likelihood to graduate from college; they are better prepared to apply their learning skills in their prospective careers (Lund & Lee, 2015). The many benefits for students involved in service learning include problem-solving skills, adaptability to various settings, awareness of community issues, increased empathy, and the ability to minimize stereotypes toward minority groups in society (Dalmida et al., 2016). Individuals who participate in service learning demonstrate increased creativity and flexibility in recognizing the importance of cultural competencies in the environment (Dalmida et al., 2016).

Moreover, service learning also helps to promote the needs of the community and highlights the learning principle of service learning while improving higher education outcomes. Faculty support is vital to service learning, including possible research opportunities and building long-lasting relationships with community agencies. Service learning is also a teaching method geared toward assisting individuals in garnering adequate skills while administrators evaluate the instructional design in schools so that students link teaching with community resources (Young & Karme, 2015). Students who participate in service learning often gather a wide array of skills that include critical thinking and communication (Cooper, 2013). Furthermore, according to Cooper (2013), service-learning experiences can support multiple learning avenues, providing optional pathways for learners. Students graduating high school may not be prepared for employment or have matching expectations with the job expectations of employers

(Bauer-Wolf, 2018). Service learning is one such educational process for preparing students to become future contributing members of society and the economy. Service learning is a longstanding element in communities, and scholars must research appropriate models to highlight the value of service learning (Davidson et al., 2010).

Although research regarding graduates' perspectives on employment and service learning would demonstrate essential findings, I have found no research that has examined how high school graduates in the Cayman Islands perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing a job postgraduation. Further research is warranted into examining service learning in institutions to address the documented problem of graduates in the Cayman Islands lacking skills to gain employment (Ramson, 2014).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceived effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment postgraduation in the Cayman Islands. The target population was graduates from prominent high schools in which service learning is included in the curriculum. Polin and Keene's (2010) findings revealed that a qualitative study assists researchers in understanding the significance and meaning that each attribute to the service-learning element being taught in the classroom and connects it to the course experience. Nutefall (2014) emphasized that experiential learning allows the learner to go through a cycle that shows how practical experience can cement an idea while reflecting on the importance of community resources and skill development.

Research Questions

RQ: How do graduates perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment postgraduation in the Cayman Islands?

Conceptual Framework

The theory appropriate as a conceptual framework for this study was ELT introduced by Dewey (1934). Dewey expressed how crucial it is for students to engage in service and reinforced the value it contributes to knowledge through the inner thoughts that come to reality by participating in experiential learning. Innovation is likely accessible in educational institutions, and Dewey (1934) argued that administrators should approve courses that assist students in thinking critically at a graduate level. Kolb (1984) conceptualized Dewey's (1934) steps in experiential learning that involve concrete experience and active participation. This theory was vital in understanding graduates with experiences that increase civic engagement and better prepare students to participate in a democratic society.

Behar-Horenstein et al. (2016) suggested that participating in service learning endorses the component of socialization, which is an integrated framework used by the school to serve the community through various activities. Sudria et al. (2018) emphasized that Kolb learning theories consist of four learning styles: (a) divergers, (b) assimilators, (c) convergers, and (d) accommodators. Each learner demonstrates learning through their learning experiences whether in concrete experiences, reflective observation, or through actual experiments, but each of these learning styles does not match every learning situation (Sudria et al., 2018). Each learning style was accessed in this study and

graduates were placed in various groups with different learning styles for this investigation. This assessment demonstrated that a graduate's learning style is likely to correlate with a choice of career and point to a selected area of interest. The experiential theory helped to analyze the experiences of graduates who have been positively impacted by the embedded academic component of service learning. I identified graduate attributes through observing verbal and written communication in a knowledge base economy, which is crucial to experiential theory.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a qualitative case study. This design was appropriate because the participants viewed the open-ended questions as unobtrusive, and they responded simultaneously to being open about the social issue (Yin, 2013). Open-ended interviews are viewed as one of the most common approaches used by researchers to retrieve qualitative data in an investigation (Roulston, 2010). According to Azure et al. (2019), qualitative case studies have enormous benefits such as analyzing how a single unit works and considering how these units can function in the future. Qualitative case studies allow the researcher to observe a holistic study, and participants can describe the processes in a real-life context (Azure et al., 2019).

A qualitative case study design was used to obtain the relevant answers to how or why questions in this study (Yin, 2012). Furthermore, participants can express their opinion and make necessary recommendations as to the educational benefit in institutions (Peterson, 2016). In this study, the phenomenon under study was the perceived effectiveness of service learning related to graduates who have gone through this process.

Merriam (1988) argued that case study research involves a detailed and prolonged investigation of individuals and observation of participants' behavior to understand the context of the study. Therefore, in this study, I explored the graduates' experiences from service learning and how the program influenced their jobs postgraduation. When conducting interviews, using open-ended questions make it easier to obtain direct responses from interviewees and easier to manage (Mokibelo, 2018). To complete this investigation, information was collected from each graduate through open-ended and semistructured interviews and a document review process.

By using a case study in this research, I was able to provide a more detailed form of communication than would have been collected from other research methods, such as surveys. Hundreds of individuals graduate each year from high schools in the Cayman Islands. Therefore, I coordinated with the personnel at the high school to obtain information for the study. Participants in each school were selected based on the service-learning course at the school and the criteria that the participants had been employed for over 2 years and had some experience in leadership roles.

I conducted interviews with individuals who are graduates and who have specific experience with service learning. The primary data collection included open-ended interviews conducted by a single investigator. The open-ended interview questions were used to build relationships and seek clarification, while the discussion was expanded to encourage interaction. Also, open-ended questions can capture any new insights that may arise in the interview (Yeong et al., 2018). A functional research question can affect and narrow the scope of a study (Tarozzi, 2013). I developed the interview guide I used for

the data collection based on the review of the literature as well as my expertise in service learning.

I used the purposive sampling strategy to identify a target population that fits the criteria for the study. Hickey (2016) accentuated that purposive sampling is a method of nonprobability sampling and is commonly used by scholars in qualitative research. Furthermore, it is sufficient to interview a small number of people in a case study design (Yin, 2009). When using this sampling strategy in research, the investigator must have advance knowledge of the target population (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Morse (2015) explained that saturation is considered in all qualitative research and is used when determining sample size. Scholars achieve saturation when they produce rich data and adequate data such that the ideas and responses are repeated by participants and no new information is being contributed. Saturation was evident after completion of data collection and this study is a substantial contribution to the literature on this phenomenon.

Definitions

Civic engagement: Working to transform the community or individual lives while developing a combination various skills, values, and motivation to achieve common goals (Caron, 2017).

Curriculum: Designed to assist learners and nurture expertise while becoming autonomous through the use of task in the classroom. It also equips students with authentic resources relevant in various disciplines by giving them more information, which increases their understanding of the materials used in the classroom (Erickson, 2002).

Experiential learning: Generally defined as a hands-on learning approach that helps individuals learn and process their experiences critically (Voukelatou, 2019).

Instructional design: A programmatic invention used in education to determine the context of the program and share the program's learning objective (Kammerlocher & Librarian, 2018).

Project: A unique task in creating something specific (Fahrenkrog et al., 2004).

Service learning: An educational element in academia that points to the overall well-being of community members. (Heffernan, 2001)

Volunteer: Persons who engage in activities they are given an option to accept or reject on their terms (Malluhi & Alomran, 2019).

Assumptions

I assumed that students involved in this service-learning project would be open in answering the interview questions. I also assumed the student participants would be able to accurately recall their experiences with the service-learning project after graduating from high school. I assumed the participants would answer the questions truthfully (Krokoszinski & Hossler, 2016). I assumed that participants would compare experiences that have contributed to employment opportunities as having a positive impact on their peers and society. The service-learning projects are likely to influence the level of volunteers in high school while students gain familiarity with partners in the community after graduation (Jones, 2010; Yob, 2014). I assumed the programs implemented in schools would support curricula activities and be established according to the laws and policies of the education department (Hsu et al., 2016).

Scope and Delimitations

The delimitations of this study included using high schools in the Cayman Islands due to time constraint and funding for the project. Second, the case study was based on service learning and not an internship or community service. In this case study, service learning is different from community service (Blankson et al., 2015). Community service assists students in achieving a goal set by an individual or an organization that needs minimum preparation when participating (Blankson et al., 2015). Therefore, I visualized word usage patterns during the collection process when referring to community services activities in the study. In the study, I focused on a particular high school and assumed these students sought career opportunities after graduating (see Nilsson & Ripmeester, 2016; Schatz & Lammers, 2013). I did not include graduates from any other schools who may be influenced or involved in the service-learning projects in the community.

Limitations

Case study designs, as all research designs do, come with limitations. Baskarada (2014) highlighted that case studies could become lengthy and lack rigor. The results of the current study were considered regardless of its limitations. First, the students who volunteered to give interviews were graduates in a demographic area. Hence, if extended to another region, the results might have been different. Second, the lack of random assignment to the intervention process in service-learning research could be seen as a compromise of internal validity. Another limitation was not observing the service-learning programs at the various schools; because I chose purposeful sampling procedures in selecting the school, results may not represent a diversified representative

of the sample to include service learning. Generating data from individual narratives may limit the transferability of the results. Because this is qualitative research, it is critical to establish the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to enhance the quality of case studies in the study.

Riege (2003) indicated that the credibility in a qualitative study works parallel to construct internal validity. This was demonstrated by the interviewees or peers who may interpret realities in multiple ways, and as such, the research is carried out in a specific way that ensured the credibility of the study. Riege (2003) further indicated that transferability functions as external validity in quantitative research. This was accomplished when the research showed the phenomenon in similar or different findings, and generalization can be achieved. Lincoln and Guba (1985) highlighted the importance of dependability in qualitative research, showing indications of stability and consistency in the process of the study, which was evident in how the interviews were conducted. Furthermore, Lincoln and Guba (1985) identified that confirmability corresponds with validity and shows whether the data were interpreted in a logical manner and free from prejudice. The interview and coding process provided evidence in analyzing and examining the data, which is critical to evaluate qualitative data and to understand the credibility of the results in the present study. Chong (2019) accentuated that scholars must categorize raw data to understand the coding process, which was critical to analyze or confirm the findings. Subsequently, it was critical throughout the process to conceal any identity or confidential information and gave a pseudonym. Furthermore, collecting and analyzing the data was crucial in this study to create a unique technique used in this

research to establish the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which is a reasonable criterion of qualitative research achieved in the design phase.

Significance

This research filled the gap in understanding how graduates perceive the effectiveness of service learning. The study provided much-needed insight into institutions and focused on producing graduates who are civic minded and act with a sense of global responsibility (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010). The key players in this study were the school, community clubs, companies, not-for-profit organizations, and various academic institutions: high schools, colleges, and universities. Lee et al. (2007) agreed that the general benefits of service learning are well known to scholars, and individuals will find meaningful ways to transfer knowledge from the selected students to the local communities. Therefore, individuals become aware of their surroundings and how they can impact their community and demonstrate empathy.

Harkavy (1996) indicated that the significance of a case study gives a researcher a personal connection to the research. It shapes an understanding of how the topic can bring out new concepts and who will be informed of the study. Students will learn more effectively and apply the course content to the real-world settings. Service-learning practices have a history and impact laws and policies and shape individual understanding of career goals in a real-world crisis (Beatty, 2010). Therefore, both private and public organizations benefit from retaining employees because of the desire to respond to personal and situational needs. Hence, individuals will develop an attitude in providing

useful service to maintain a quality society of individuals learning to serve (Driscoll et al., 1996).

Summary

In this chapter, I described my plans to explore service learning among high school graduates and their employment. Service learning includes the content of the courses, and the literature must support the service component of the courses included in the curriculum (Wickam, 2018). The experiential theory was appropriate for this study because it demonstrates that learning comes from solving real problems in the community (Dewey, 1938). In analyzing a service-learning program, a school should meet the community's needs by displaying flexibility so that students can be first responders to the unmet needs in various communities (Dalmida et al., 2016). In this chapter, I highlighted the relevant aspect of engagement and how students' civic engagement helps them to contribute positively to society in the desired areas of their profession. Service learning is a positive approach to build partnerships that go beyond high school and calls for a more profound appreciation of learning for academic success. It also aligns with organizations that drive future careers in various fields (Lewing, 2019) and is an institutional investment in the community. Students provide useful information to community partners who increase students' appreciation of the combination of learning and community services, adding value to the community and schools (Roberts et al., 2019). For students to benefit from these service-learning programs, they must be preplanned and promote diversity in the classroom. Moreover, service learning fosters a caring skill needed in a changing and democratic society.

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on service learning and explored the historical findings and the link to employment opportunities. I expound on the reasons students choose service learning before graduation, including discourse on statistics evaluating the impact of service-learning programs. The chapter includes a discussion of the limitations of service learning and the benefit of training students and education professionals. Lastly, I conclude Chapter 2 by exploring areas of improvement and recommendations in sustaining service learning in educational institutions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Service learning helps students become better prepared and engaged in society (Rutti et al., 2016). Specifically, the lack of service learning can negatively affect students' potential employment, which negatively impacts the economy (Young & Karne, 2015). Service learning may remove barriers that exist between learning institutions and public and private organizations (Wylie, 2014). Currently, there is a national debate over whether students with high school degrees are prepared for employment and whether their level of perceived preparedness matches the expectations of employers (Grasgreen, 2014). Service learning allows students to be better prepared for college and are more likely to graduate with skills appropriate for their career of choice (Lund & Lee, 2015). Students involved in service learning benefit by developing (a) problem-solving skills, (b) adaptability to various settings, (c) awareness of community issues, (d) increased empathy, and (e) the ability to minimize bias toward minority group in society (Dalmida et al., 2016). Individuals who have participated in service learning demonstrate increased creativity and flexibility in recognizing the importance of cultural competencies in the environment (Dalmida et al., 2016).

Moreover, service learning also helps to promote the needs of the community and highlights the learning principles of service learning while improving higher education outcomes in schools. Faculty support is vital to successful service learning, which can lead to research opportunities in universities and build long-lasting relationships with community agencies. Service learning is also a teaching method geared toward assisting individuals in garnering adequate skills while administrators evaluate the instructional

design in schools so that students will link teaching with community resources (Young & Karme, 2015). Students who participate in service learning gather a wide array of skills, including critical thinking and communication skills (Cooper, 2013). Furthermore, according to Cooper (2013), these individuals receive a reciprocal effect of benefits from participating in service learning. Students graduating high school may not always be prepared for employment or be prepared to meet the expectations of employers (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). Service learning is an educational process that helps prepare students to be contributing members of society and the economy.

Bamber and Hankin (2011) agreed that service-learning models in the community are increasingly essential to helping students become responsible citizens. Community members have formed a collaboration to formulate strategies, ideas, and solutions that address organizational needs. Bamber and Hankin (2011) built a transformative learning model that helps to understand various differences in society and record experiences on different initiatives on the moral and cultural transformation of individuals, which is crucial globally (Bamber & Hankin, 2011). Service learning is a longstanding element in communities, and scholars must research appropriate models that will highlight this (Davidson et al., 2010). Although the aforementioned research regarding graduates' perspectives on employment and service learning and the benefits to students demonstrates essential findings, I have found no research that has examined how high school graduates in the Cayman Islands perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing a job postgraduation. Further research is needed to examine service

learning in institutions to address the documented problem of graduates lacking skills to gain employment (Ramson, 2014).

Globally schools accept service learning as a way of strengthening democratic and participatory practice (Chambers, 2009). A survey conducted revealed that 64% of all public schools, including 83% of public high schools, have a mandatory requirement for students to participate in some kind of hands-on project, such as community service activities (Skinner & Chapman, 1999). Service learning is described as learning by doing and providing students with authentic learning experiences to solve a social problem in their community (Farber & Bishop, 2018). Students learn to make informed decisions when participating in decision-making processes (Taylor, 2014). Students reflect on the element of service learning that builds positive attitudes toward the community while they learn skills that assist in the resolution of social problems (Eyler, 2002; St. & Julie, 2014). It is crucial to ask questions to guide the literature process and support the research.

In this chapter, I examine the body of literature used in the study. My literature review will begin with the theoretical framework and build on a service-learning overview. This section includes a thorough review and synthesis of existing literature found on service learning. I review literature on service-learning elements in schools and benefits to student engagement, skill sets, employability, and capability to combine both educational activities, collaborating and fostering positive relationships with community partners. The chapter ends with a summary.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted my research electronically by reviewing peer-reviewed articles and empirical studies through databases, such as ProQuest, SocIndex, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost, SocIndex, EBSCO, ProQuest Central, ERIC, PsycINFO, Taylor and Francis Online, and SAGE Premier, to obtain the relevant research material. Keywords were used to ascertain literature for my subject matter: *service learning, postgraduation, higher education, experiential learning, education, high school, secondary education, graduates, attitudes, employability, skills, gender and culture, knowledge and society, urban educational systems, social responsibility, barriers in education, cultural competency, awareness, disadvantages of service learning, advantages of service serving, compare and contrast service learning, student engagement, service-learning programs, students availability, access to community members, community based programs, males and education, females and education, service learning and enrichment, underachievement, students perception, at-risk students, gifted students, traditional learning, grounded theory, experiential learning theory, Kolb's theory, high school training, and competency.*

The search generated hundreds of articles that I have reviewed thoroughly to select the materials for the literature review. I chose pieces both current and past. The current articles were published within the last 5 years (from 2014) and from peer-reviewed journals. Some items were not included based on the research topic, and information was extracted from some articles. The question that guided my literature review is, "How do graduates perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in

securing employment postgraduation in the Cayman Islands?” This question helps to support both the research problem and the research design.

Theoretical Foundation

Between 1916 and 1938, the work of Dewey has highlighted for teaching individuals the importance of social issues in a curriculum to lead to social reform. After World War II, scholars used Dewey’s work as a blueprint for classroom inquiry (Dewey, 1956). Dewey made a significant contribution to educational thought and practice in schools. Dewey (1929) was adamant about addressing teaching and learning in institutions that must adapt to the student interest. Dewey’s type of reasoning reached far beyond the standard education that schools offer and move in the direction of adapting a child-centered environment (Cohen, 1998). Dewey sought to solve the problems both in school and society and opined the need of reformation that revisits the approach of a child-centered learning experience that is challenging to implement in the 20th century. Dewey’s intention of implementing this approach was not taken lightly by scholars, such as Hofstadter (Lacy, 2017), who opposed and disputed that schooling would be more humane if it engaged with students’ interests and activities. White (1992) postulated that individuals will understand the foundation of experiential learning and how it can be applied to work and personal development. It can heighten understanding of specific actions, and to improve skills in problem solving. Professional development makes it conceptual and concrete through the educative experiential learning experience and by raising reflective observation (Dewey, 1957; Eyler, 2002; Kolb, 1984).

Kolb (1984) built on Dewey's (1938) ELT. Service learning has been recognized as the fundamental element of experience in the process of learning. Experiential learning has been adapted in various fields and training efforts to develop new skills (O'Brien et al., 2017; St. & Julie, 2014). ELT is useful in a pedagogical approach and bears similarities in learning and transformation in a purposeful experience (Kolb, 1984). Service-learning expertise is known to impact professional competence and is best determined by reflection (Gregorová et al., 2016). Based on this learning theory, experiential learning can be integrated with community-based programs such as service learning, a holistic growth approach and efficient pedagogical approach (Naudé, 2015).

I chose ELT as the foundation for this qualitative case study because it provided a holistic model of the learning process and a multilinear model of individual development. ELT is consistent with learning about people and how they grow and develop in an environment (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991). Experiential learning is crucial in the learning process of an organization and can be distinguished from other learning theories (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991). Educational theorist Kolb (1984) reported that experiential education is a transformation process where knowledge is created through experiences that are influential and establish tenets that link service and learning through reflection and action. Kolb and Kolb (2017) acknowledged that learning comes through knowledge, which is communicated through an individual's action mode.

The social exchange of cultural knowledge helps to develop thought and schema (Kayes, 2005). Thus, Kolb and Kolb's (2017) learning theory has shown both individual and social aspects of the learning process, which are vital in forming interdependent

relationships. Kolb and Kolb (2017) described tacit knowledge as concrete processes that are collectively created at the organizational level and ELT can be used to explain employees learning behavior in the workplace (Kolb & Kolb, 2017). ELT consists of the entirety of human activities of both thinking and behaving while adapting to environmental situations (Boyatzis & Kolb, 1991). Kolb's model of experiential learning is a four-step process: (a) feeling, (b) thought, (c) thinking, and (d) action. This theory places experience at the center of learning (Bohon et al., 2017). ELT is a competency model that includes learning skills vital to the four modes of learning: (a) diverging, (b) assimilating, (c) converging, and (d) accommodating. These modes of learning skills entail competencies that are clear and useful in various positions in the workplace (Atkinson & Murrell, 1988).

Service-Learning Literature Review

Since the late 1960s, service learning has been studied, and elements of this practice can be traced to Dewey during the 20th century. Dewey's writings influenced leaders, and in an attempt to identify and articulate solutions to problems, practitioners continued to amplify the work of the Dewey program for educational reform, which is widely recognized in experiential learning (Kolb, 2014). Various forces have challenged the role of service learning. However, despite the setbacks of service learning in the past, the United States' National and Community Service Trust Act (1990, 1993) played a pivotal role in service learning being adopted as a pedagogical approach (Roberts & Edward, 2015).

Historical Foundation of Service Learning

Dewey (1938) proposed the dimensions of experiences that occur during the learning environment. Dewey highlighted that each of the experience must consist of both elements to create a positive impact; if it does not exist, it remains void and not educative (Dewey, 1938). The objective of learning is the combination of both the individual interaction and the environment (Larsen, 2016; Shumer, 1993b). The journey continued with service learning, while the instructional method must still travel far to reach full adoption by the educational facilities globally while including diversity (Womble & Adams, 2016). The historical roots of service learning underlined education and outlined that it has been developed in different directions but still points to Dewey's development of this approach and indicates that schools must both teach knowledge and citizenship (Rauschert & Byram, 2018). The experts in the social field have corroborated that service learning is different from community service; service learning is a tutorial training with a clear learning outcome. It is also based on the ongoing reflection and interaction within a specific community of need (Holt, 2017; Jacoby, 1996; Zlotkowski, 2007). Historically, the commitment to service has also been seen among religious institutions and has also been a crucial part in higher education; therefore, educators are often committed to educating students while participating in society and affirming the importance of service in community outreach programs (Altman, 1996).

Educational Journey of Service Learning

Shaw (2018) used a quantitative comparative approach that indicated that using a hybrid approach of service learning in the classroom improves a range of learning,

including social and personal outcomes. The study also supported the assertion that service learning offers sustainable alternatives while providing a channel between academic knowledge, employment, and the community. Furthermore, the students agreed that they gained skills, including technical and managerial. Besides, they learned to communicate more effectively while evaluating multiple sources, both orally and in writing (Shaw, 2018). Data revealed that service-learning class influences long term decisions regarding career plans, decision making, and aspirations of new ideas and experiences and helps students to be better prepared for higher education (Pelco & Ball, 2018). Hence in higher education, it is found that these institutions have the potential to leverage experiential education practices that will support various opportunities and provide students with critical support in work related learning while exploring career opportunities that lead to firm commitments in organizations (Smith et al., 2009)

In the community there had been far too many social needs to be addressed. Rather than disengaging students, the social concern can be translated into service-learning opportunities and students can connect with the realities in the community in which they live (Champagne, 2006). The educational experience in the United States has seen a decline and advancement of various approaches to education, including service learning. Regardless of the ongoing development, it is a method that is used to transform individual experiences (Roberts & Edwards, 2015). When a service-learning program is applied to a school's curriculum, students get an opportunity to avail themselves of (others who require) such services. One must be tenacious in transmuting the present situation in which one finds oneself, hence, through active learning, students will develop

the ability to question the assumptions and make the connections to what is learned in different settings such as school based agricultural education (Roberts & Edwards, 2015).

Growth of Service Learning

It is clear that Dewey's educational approach is well adapted to the general status of service learning and adds to the theory of service learning (Giles & Eyer, 1994). Service-learning programs on campuses have drastically changed over the past century; Harkavy and Hartley (2010) highlighted the degree as to how this happened. The authors stated that a national coalition of colleges and universities in the United States, namely "The Campus Compact" survey, revealed that service-learning courses have grown from 3 institutions in 1985 to over 1,100 in 2009 (Harkavy & Hartley, 2010). The country reported approximately a quarter of all colleges and universities in the United States offer service-learning courses. This number accounts for 28% of its member institutions that offered some service-learning courses during the academic year (Campus Compact, 2006).

These experts coined service learning through a supportive arm of the Southern Regional Board and have grown steadily over many years. Experts spent time researching this phenomenon and aligned this approach with the principles of Dewey; however, some observers postulated that more research is needed to see the elements of service learning that is effective when implemented (Markus et al., 1993; Straus & Eckenrode, 2014). The concept of objective knowledge was opposed by Dewey (1957) as he upheld the argument that philosophy guides an individual decision making so that a person can be easily led through this world by learning the real-life experiences. The understanding of

life must be constructed and impactful (Dewey, 1957). Service learning is fundamental and rooted deeply in Judeo, Christian, and Hindu beliefs (Dass & Bush, 1992).

In analyzing specific events that led to service learning, Reiman (1992) reflected on the Great Depression and posit that Mrs. Roosevelt was the inspiration behind her husband when she convinced the President of the need to create jobs and programs targeting American youth. The New Deal and American Youth initiative have created jobs for more than 700,000 youth with age ranges from 16-25 years, which opened the era of youth development and employment services (Reiman, 1992). During this setting, students develop a sense of responsibility to help others in becoming socially responsible activist in a meaningful way (Adarlo, 2017). To improve community college students' awareness in social justice and social activism can be particularly beneficial through service-learning engagement which actively demonstrates how service learning can actively facilitate better problem-solving skills that offer a civic dimension (DePaola, 2014). According to Kohlbry (2016) service learning contributed to student development and problem-solving. Service learning has gained momentum in recent decades, as students immerse themselves in a competitive learning environment and promote academic quality (Weidner et al., 2018).

By fostering students' cognitive, affective, social, and behavioral skills, service learning promoted collaborative and reflective elements that influence civic behaviors in early stages of development while advancing institutional, educational proficiencies (Fisher et al., 2017). It was necessary to maintain communication with community partners, and it will cultivate a strong network of support. In undertaking these projects

gained access to opportunities and initiatives for service-learning activities (Straus & Eckenrode, 2014). Nonetheless, some of these are terms based on outdated literature; service learning is well documented and it shown compelling evidence on the various academic programs that work together in developing service learning in responding to the unmet needs of the community (Celio et al., 2011; Warren, 2012). An economist might perceive service learning as being costly for an institution to develop programs and will dismiss the approach (Bednar & Simpson, 2013). However, if terms like community-based learning are used, educators will be more open-minded to be asserting the academic primacy of the service-learning experience that can be aligned with management projects (Bednar & Simpson, 2013).

Connecting Service Learning to Student Activities

Globally, schools have employed service learning as an academic arm in building civic engagement efforts while compassing a wide variety of activities that enable individuals to participate in democracy processes (Grain & Lund, 2016; Grain et al., 2019). Students are expected to spend time with their peers during their undergraduate courses and getting familiar with multicultural nationalities in a globalized economy while they are accustomed to the techniques of service learning and increasing their understanding in various capacities in learning (Traver et al., 2014).

Including community service as a criterion in graduation is now a current trend in schools. Hence, this may prevent them from meeting the graduation requirements at most schools (Cloyd, 2017). When students are given opportunities to apply their academic knowledge, they will become aware of the surroundings and work to affect positive social

change. Moreover, they are likely to be accountable and be prepared to undertake their selected role entirety (Winans-Solis, 2014). Students who volunteer apply the knowledge gained from these schools and other educational facilities to engage in the community and create a long-term effect. It cultivates a self-reflection and helps to modify the attitudes toward academics while enhancing the leverage of professionalism that is being displayed (Fullerton et al., 2015).

Teachers ensure that appropriate courses are available when exchanging programs in various countries, which boosts the confidence of those involved in the service-learning projects. This foundation assisted in minimizing labor costs and encouraging students to become active participants in modern society to analyze and develop critical thinking (Su & Chi, 2016). In addition, the completion of a service-learning project suggests positive effects on each student's perceptions and boost leadership qualities that will tackle social issues while empathizing with others in his/her surroundings (Sabbaghi et al., 2013). Developing skills from various institutions using school and community-based experience helps form secure a bond that is linked to future careers and employment opportunities (Preston, 2013).

Moss (2009) defined service learning as a method that is used to get young people and adults to participate actively in the services that are arranged to collaborate the desiderata of the community through the school, which can be integrated into a school curriculum. Besides, Moss further stated that the service-learning experience should be affiliated with the academic course content. Dunlop and Webster (2009) admitted that when service learning is not appropriately allied to the school's curriculum, it can have

potentially adverse effects on the students and the community members which they are connected.

Service Learning and Experience

According to Richards et al. (2013), service learning allows students to engage in a reflection process. The authors further stated that it will give students enormous opportunities, especially when it comes to appraisal, their active roles in their school, where they live and the community (Richards et al., 2013). Today, students are impacted socially while engaging in complex issues that not only in society but have a lasting impact on many generations (Gökmenoğlu, 2017). The discussions provided support for potential candidates of a cross-disciplinary program in schools while gaining an understanding of cross-cultural interactions. Ideally, individuals will develop high moral, ethical and democratic values that enable skilled professionals to be held accountable for their action which foster a more holistic workplace (Cansaran et al., 2010; Ramey, 2013).

Adolescents will understand the feelings of friendship solidarity and those that are linked to the public interest and the people who are in need (Celio et al., 2011). Richards et al. (2013) accentuated that hands-on experiences allow students to be involved in a project that can also develop a lifetime friendship. This type of involvement in the community is one of the main things that helps young individuals to meet old and vice versa (Loyola University, 2016).

Service Learning and Curriculum

The curricula have changed and allows teachers to bring their knowledge into the classroom, and it will enable them to show what they believe. There are different phrases

when implementing a curriculum change. Kirkland (2014) reminded the audience that service learning is a transformative movement. It demands a combination of planning, consideration and actively engaged.

Service learning is a process which provided a link between academic skills and the ability to solve social problems in the community (The National Youth Leadership Council, 2016). The National Youth Leadership Council underlined that these links give adolescents a voice that will help them to socialize in our society; it also offers youth a sense of belonging that they need to meet their individual goals (The National Youth Leadership Council, 2016). There are many models for service learning; Heffernan (2001) highlighted that in implementing service learning in a Christian school institution, it would be highly likely that while practicing this service it can equip a student for a lifetime. Besides, he demonstrates that it is appropriate and adaptable so that it can foster responsibility and develop our young Christian future leaders (Heffernan, 2001).

Service Learning and Engagement

Spring et al. (2006) outlined that service-learning students have shown vast improvement in high school who are directly involved with people in the community which increase their engagement in volunteering in organizations. However, only half of the students participate in service. By doing such service, students can be responsible citizens in their chosen areas of study. Service learning helps students develop a sense of awareness which is desirous in this society knowing that it will also increase their self-esteem (Youniss & Yates, 1999).

The main focus is high school and colleges to participate in service learning and students must be funded for their effort (Jones et al., 2008). Funding can be an essential issue when these projects are presented. Therefore, the government has the responsibility in budgeting funds so that it will encourage students to participate in the service (Stanton & Wagner, 2010). Sharing thoughts amongst students plays a vital role in service learning (Colby et al., 2009). Funding can be an essential issue when these projects are presented. When lecturers engage students in the communities, it is only a scratch on the surface of the things that are needed in the communities (Colby et al., 2009).

Postgraduation and Service Learning

Rothman and Sisman (2016) included a sample of 198 students for a study of an internship's impact. These students enrolled for academic credit in an internship class during the last term of university; it included students who were doing business, accounting, and liberal arts. During the internships, students reported the impact of the experience and how it guided them into a career path and gave him/her firm intentions to pursue the same job or industry. Students reflected on their leaning and continued in the same industry after graduation while others explore another industry.

Experiential learning has helped students develop an understanding of the community and become active citizens. Students typically have flexible schedules for collaborating with members of the community and preparing for the project assigned (Fede et al., 2018). This is the result from the prior engagement and knowledge of the student that result in a transferable learning and development environment for the student. Notwithstanding, the findings revealed that approximately 73% of the students

who were employed reported that they have worked as intern in the community while building opportunities for a traditional paid employment. The investigation evaluated the effects of paid student employment and the development process of both civic behaviors and attitudes (Fede et al., 2018).

Service learning created active agents in the service industry while producing citizenry within society (Weidner et al., 2018). The intention of continued related service in high school lends itself as an effective strategy to develop a career and prepare them for work and career degrees (Astin et al., 1999). University students may have an advantage when applying to colleges to document service hours and can also be a predictor in pursuing service-related profession. Subsequently, the associated interactions with stakeholders may highlight student motivation and establish empowerment within the specific sector that goes beyond the service environment (Soria & Thomas-Card, 2014). An individual who validates a sense of societal connectedness in committing to the duty that is assigned is able to foster civic responsibility and acknowledge ethical boundaries while reflection shape experiences (Flanagan & Christens, 2011). To understand one's role in the community, equipping oneself with the skills and knowledge to complete a project is essential. Individuals must be able to connect work with the curriculum, which makes academics more relevant and the ability in making better citizens (Being Good Neighbors, 2017; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996).

Students' Perceptions of Service Learning

Shaw (2018) conducted a study where the goal was having students observe through reflective service learning and how it assists them to understand the course

content. Shaw (2018) explored the perceptions of students in Midwestern University where students participated in an intercultural communication course and focused on self-reflections for the entire course. The result was overwhelming; over 95% of the students who participated recognized the learning outcomes that were associated with the service-learning element in the assignment. The above findings reveal that service-learning component in the communication course provides avenues for students in their overall education process and professional careers.

Findings in various academic disciplines show that the majority of these programs are subject-oriented and specially focused on the aspect of institutionalizing (Salam et al., 2019). One such discipline revealed that little is known as the effectiveness in facilitating students' perceptive on service learning based on the professional and community benefits (Darby et al., 2016). Within the human experience, the individual holds multiple perspectives, including distinctive skills, attitudes, and beliefs, and is understood by the person who undergoes the experience (Danyluk et al., 2015). Service learning throughout academic courses identified needs and gain the opportunity to respond to regional requests from associated community needs for post secondary institutions (Statistics Canada, 2011). The United States has created an environment to foster competent practitioners, so that individuals can immerse themselves in quality experiences and learning opportunities while providing global awareness of international issues (Pechak & Thompson, 2009).

Global Perspectives on Service Learning

The global perspectives of service learning influence scholastic progress compared to involuntary service and increase the frequency of this engagement will have a lasting influence on others (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011). In general, it is safe to declare that when youth are involved in civic activities, they are more likely to acquire higher education and strive academically (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). This type of service gives them an edge over their peers and are more likely to graduate (Engberg, 2013). When graduates are exposed to service learning as an educational experience, it will help to develop global citizens. At the same time, the educational institutions must plan strategically so that the purposes of these facilities translated goals that incorporated experiences throughout the schools' curriculum (Farhokhi, & Hashemi, 2011; Montgomery et al., 2017).

Students developed bonding with peers and appreciate the value of giving back to the community through service programs (Yamauchi et al., 2006). Service learning provided a structured environment that gives the student time to reflect on what being learned to connect it to service activities and is appropriate to individuals from different age groups, which also assists in developmental abilities (Yamauchi et al., 2006). When students participated in giving back to society, it expands their perspectives and helps them gather a sense of the world in becoming responsible citizens in their surroundings (Sevart & Dean, 2019)

International Learning Experiences

As such, service learning has required the careful articulation of the learning outcomes of service learning and how it is associated with the international workforce and the influence of academic, internships or professional commitments (Rose et al., 2019). service learning for international students created opportunities for immersive learning experiences. These experiences may be contrary to the home countries of each participant, but in the end, it promotes attitude and behavioral changes (Miller et al., 2015).

Service learning enabled citizens to share their views through various expressions in creating a shared vision while possibly empowering the community in need (Bringle, 2015; Franta, 1994). To advance the knowledge of service learning, individuals can generate positive relationships through a global and humanitarian crisis. Goffnett et al. (2013) suggested humanitarian organizations face challenges over the years when faced with natural disasters. However, through education and service, service-learning students are able to collaborate with relief agencies to establish an impactful humanitarian logistics that will leave communities with effective solutions. These momentums encourage partnerships equipped practitioners to enhance the outcome for all constituencies (Grain & Lund, 2016; Ling, 2016).

The management in organizations are often in line with international institutions developed to build responsible leaders through specific learning objectives, including preparation and reflection as in experiential learning (Eriksen & Cooper, 2018). Kackar-Cam and Schmidt (2014) discussed that service-learning opportunities are needed to

fulfill adolescents' needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Globally, companies often provide international service-learning programs that are designed to allow employees to work aboard. This service assignment is in a nonprofit organization for a short time contributing his/her knowledge in exchange for a rich unforgettable experience that lasts a lifetime (Litow, 2012). Human resource development promotes social sustainability by creating projects and integrate service-learning programs to established partnerships with nongovernmental entities in support of global issues (Pless et al., 2012).

Service Learning in Higher Education

Colleges have played an essential role in students' ability to develop into culturally competent, global citizens (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011; Braskamp et al., 2009; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Donnelly-Smith, 2009). It is crucial that students can immerse themselves in experiences that give them a unique opportunity to engage with others from different ethnicities and develop a broader sense of competence, maturity, and sensitivity (Dykhouse, 2016; Institute of International Education, 2011). Regardless of the length of time that is spent abroad, the international immersion shares a common goal with students in having a constructive view of the world around us while increasing the awareness and understanding of people's culture. Studying abroad helped students to become aware of their learning and reevaluate their own identity while increasing self-confidence in dealing with complex situations (Braskamp & Engberg, 2011).

The institutions of higher learning can provide the exposure of service learning in various disciplines that will meet the community needs, such as the international cry of

the aging community (Augustin & Freshman, 2016). For example, with a structured plan to increase students' knowledge while changing one's attitude towards the aging community, educators can align their courses to influence careers in elderly care. This experience is transformational in helping both health professionals and students to reflect and discover their untapped potential in realizing the discovery of career opportunities in unexplored fields (Augustin & Freshman, 2016; Robert & Mosher-Ashley, 2000). In the twenty-first century, health professionals have grown in their clinical education through the role of service learning and have made the connection between the different learning context in the program (Pace et al., 2019).

The number of American students who have been studying abroad has increased by more than 300% (Institute of International Education, 2011). Some of these students have enrolled in short-term programs (Institute of International Education, 2011). Due to the design of these programs, participants had an intensive opportunity to refine their communication skills and interpersonal interactions between a group of students that participate in the experience (Gaugler & Matheus, 2019). Service learning became a direct project for international students and is organized in a manner that engages youth leaders and partner with organizations to use their skills actively in designated sites. These programs are thoughtfully planned so that they create mutual benefits (Askildson et al., 2013; Bunning & Kostka, 2018). One of the key players in service learning is the reflection process, which can take many forms while students reflect on their individual approach and progress in the program and will then make any necessary adjustments. In service learning, reflection serves as a vehicular approach to evaluate the student's

experiences while transforming them into knowledge designed to achieve specific outcomes (Clever & Miller, 2019; Jacoby, 2015; Miller et al., 2015).

Service learning deepened students understanding and noted how this group has managed to interweave their knowledge comprehensively (Sawchuk, 2019). When students mastered the courses in service learning in Oakland College, the quality in learning was improved, and the students were perceptible in reflective activities, which is a critical learning pedagogy (Sawchuk, 2019). Students who were an ethno-racial minority and engaged in service learning in a refugee community experienced different learning pathway than their minority counterparts. These students were able to form deep relationships and have mutual sentiments of the population that they served (Ludwig, 2016).

Correspondingly, Lin and Bates (2015) opined that educators are obligated to the society to engage students in an education institution so that they become partners with their cohorts in providing this meaningful service so that others can be seen as philanthropists in the eyes of both who are contributing to such a worthy cause. The stages of implementing service learning in the schools must be carefully guided which will give an accurate reflection of the service and when one reflects on these services; it must be clear that it is a concept to develop the principles of social justice (Lake & Jones, 2008).

Experiential Learning Versus Traditional Learning

Wilkinson and Jones (2017) revealed that students who participate in service learning are more capable to remain calm in real life scenarios and can engage

professionally in a controlled environment. In their study, students were faced with real scenarios in undertaking a wide range of degree courses at a prominent college. The hands-on experiences supported students in these facilities by connecting students to the administrators, faculty and staff and provided similar opportunities so that they could engage in their community by solving real issues and demonstrate social responsibility (Wilkinson & Jones, 2017). Graduate-level students have conducted another study that focused on service-learning experiences in university. They used the experiential theory that Dewey (1938) posited as being realistic and argued that the model is a concrete evidence of service learning (Wickam, 2018). This study by Wickam showed how learners engaged in the problem-solving experiences and advocate for students to be active experimenters who combined learning with reflection (Wickam, 2018). The findings of the above research confirmed that the alignment in the collaborative learning environment enhanced the student experiences in business studies (Colón-Aguirre, 2017). The avenue of service learning is offered to prepare adults for the future so that they will meet their future employers' expectations and satisfy the expected standards that are in the field that are set as a guideline for employees (Colón-Aguirre, 2017).

Service Learning and Employability

Students discovered various strengths and talents that employers valued in prominent companies. To participate in a service-learning project is good news for the businesses because employers associate their needs to potential workers who will accomplish a task and meet deadlines when completing a project (Wickam, 2018). These opportunities are rare but are evident with constructive attitudes that these individuals

possess. Servicing the community is a powerful means for individuals to develop students' social responsibility (Messum et al., 2017). Bourner and Millican (2011) highlighted the impact of community involvement on the employment of prospective graduates of institutions. Hence, service learning enhanced graduates' employability. Education programs should not only concentrate on equipping graduates with technical skills. The program prepared them for a competitive workplace ahead so they will have the employability skills and competencies entering the workplace National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). It is vital to see the positive link between students volunteering in the community and graduate employability. Bourner and Millican (2011) acknowledged the viability of volunteering in the community, which is attractive to employers and the students who participate stand out more than those who undertake other forms of work experiences in schools. Billig (2010) discussed that meeting the needs of the community is not something that should be taken lightly. The students measured the need before and after the service is completed. To measure both sides will show the efforts can both be quantified and documented, which helps promote the school-community partnerships. In Akhurst's (2016) study, students who participated in service learning between 2009-2012 agreed that having the service learning documented show the benefit of international service-learning projects and includes the perspective of community partners. It was clear that some instructors did not understand the role students played in the project (Akhurst, 2016).

Students who are engaged in career readiness activities demonstrate academic and technical knowledge which includes employability and dispositions skills; hence, these

skills add to the definition of career readiness that allows individuals to set their goals and work with various teams to accomplish a task within a limited time (Giffin, 2018). For example, medical students who participated in a community outreach program which targeted high school students with research-based courses initiated early exposure on topics such as global health, sports medicine, and wellness (Karpa et al., 2015). The research showed that only one medical school reported the outreach program that secondary or high school students are given the opportunity of early exposure to medical school. There is a projected shortage that links to healthcare workers and such strategy can assist in maintaining a flow in this program that will increase the awareness to the options of health-related fields (Karpa et al., 2015).

A survey conducted in the United Kingdom revealed employability skills are necessary to employers when recruiting individuals. Billsland et al. (2014) indicated that employers are more likely to value employability skills than disciplinary-based understanding. In supporting this initiative, they published several surveys from various employers within a range of industries, and the results showed that a lack of employability skills is a significant concern for the future employer when recruiting graduates in higher education (Billsland et al., 2014). An Australian employer voiced a concern that graduates may not have the desired attributes that is needed for work readiness. They have suggested to the government of the need to integrate the relevant work skills into a tertiary curriculum (Australian Education International 2010; Barrie, 2006; Barrie et al., 2009; Bradley, 2008; Vu et al., 2011; Zanko et al., 2010).

Students' Attitudes and Service Learning

Kolb (2008) revealed that negative attitudes and stereotypes are also shown with students who are working with older adults. Therefore, students can take on the negative perceptions of the challenges of working with older adults and may find it difficult to pursue a career in this field. However, by given the opportunity of experiential learning, it enabled the student to understand the nature of the job and will develop confidence in the career choice; the findings provide information that are essential to each career and indicate the level of combining both experiential learning and service opportunities in each field to influence employment opportunities in the communities. Barnes (2016) concurred with Kolb (2008) when he examined the perception of leadership skills and the students' interest in social justice. The author used a sample of 361 students, both online and onsite, who ranged from 20-55 years of age. Barnes (2016) showed that during the study, the level of students' experiences differs in discussing the theories, ethics and cultural competence to the vulnerable population that they are serving during the course. Furthermore, the results in this investigation indicated that roughly 86% of the lecturers discussed service learning with the students. More communication is needed to create a model of service-learning component so that students will become interested and engaged voluntarily in-service learning experiences (Barnes, 2016)

Development of Skills and Service Learning

Dang et al. (2017) suggested that to facilitate an academic-community partnership for sustainable medical missions. The authors created a 12-step process for an interprofessional, global health educational, and service-learning experience for students

and faculty in a school of pharmacy and health professions. Lessons learned and practical guidance are provided to implement similar global health opportunities. Overall, there were 14 participants taking part on the mission. The partners' skills complemented one another's, as the community partner planned the logistics and the academic members provided the clinical expertise and human resources. With the support of community leaders, students and faculty can provide leadership in planning and implementation of an international public health service (Dang et al., 2017).

Communication skills are necessary in workplace; however, some employers have noted that there arise some deficiencies in both written and oral skills which are vital to the prospective job candidate (Halawati-Abdul & SOH, 2013). This type of discovery contributes to problems with integrity, teamwork and critical analysis skills, which are necessary for employment (Hinchliffe & Jolly, 2014). The environment is rapidly changing, and the employability skills gap is evident in the work environment and calls for more scrutiny in collaboration and self-management skills which are identified as being disciplined (Scholtz, 2018). Furthermore, Scholtz (2018) argued that the overall experience is useful in the working environment and will produce employability skills. There are opportunities that lies in service-learning projects that entrench conceptual knowledge using hands on experience and students will work well under pressure in varied circumstances and deliver excellent output in a timely manner (Scholtz, 2018).

Competencies in service learning supported efforts that allow self-reflection and employ resources that are related to pedagogy. It will also allow educators to explain the approach that is necessary that will lead to varied outcome in service-learning projects

(Lillo, 2019). To pursue each service-learning project, it is recommended that efforts are made to understand both the local and international context of both the leadership and communication skills that are relevant to sustain meaningful partnerships which can be impacted by global issues and the competencies that are involved (Lillo, 2019). Although the varied outcomes might not be problematic in some cases, service learning can be seen as a distraction with learning and lack the meaningful approach in assisting the community with the project as intended so that each will get a deeper understanding of service-learning pedagogy (Wasner, 2016).

Outcome of Service Learning

When students participated in real-life service, it created positive impact on their learning experiences and increased their intellectual abilities of academic content, which fostered excellent thinking skills (Brand et al., 2019). Thus, service learning may increase the retention of students in colleges because their critical skills will improve their academic achievement (Ngai et al., 2018). Moore and Sandholtz (1999) indicated that at the high school level, students are capable of developing positive attitudinal outcomes. It is evident when they participated in the service-learning projects that are available in schools. Moore and Sandholtz (1999) stressed the importance of the service-learning project that is provided in the community that each will reflect on the product, and it will meet the need of the recipients.

The geographical locations across the globe have seen an increase in service learning with the majority of research is done in the United States (Kessinger, 2015). Interestingly, a quantitative study was done in Egypt and it predicted that service learning

increase student awareness and has a positive influence on the student (Shalabi, (2017). However, experts argued that the industry requires students to be equipped with both technical and problem-solving skills. As such, service learning can be used to develop these attributes in a student (Ide & Thomas, 2011). Therefore, service learning helped to develop social responsibility in a student while shifting from a self-centered to pro-social values in the future professionals in the business industry (Petrovskaya, 2019).

Service Learning and Social Responsibility

A sample of 70 students was recruited from various academic programs in a community in Hong Kong to participate in a service-learning project. The students found out that service learning can be applied to the curriculum to teach students hands-on experience and encourage volunteerism in the community (Lee, 2015). In shaping students ethically, the school's administrator prepares projects for students that will showcase moral and social awareness and will encourage students to develop better insight and have constructive support from early years in college (Lee, 2015). These were effective in both undergrad and graduate courses, where service learning allows students who are studying business to develop a sense of moral obligation and personal responsibilities in real-life situations (Marques, 2016; Seider et al., 2011). Huda et al. (2018) agreed that corporate and social responsibility within the service-learning arena enhances sustainability. To implement service-learning programs in higher learning institutions, leaders must ensure that appropriate resources are available to take care of the local communities within society.

The engaging process underscored each responsibility that yielded self-reflection both for the students and as well as the stakeholders (Marques, 2016). Biases towards a specific target population can be dismaying; these biases contribute to the acceptance of certain behaviors in the society (Hall et al., 2015; Kogan & Schoenfeld-Tacher, 2018). It is possible to mitigate these biases by exposing students to these vulnerable groups and to help others adapt to a new setting through service learning (Knutson- Miller & Gonzalez, 2016). Service learning offers structured activities that balance formal coursework with knowledge while promoting specific needs aligning with what is taught in the classroom (Bringle et al., 2010; Roodin et al., 2013). Kogan and Schoenfeld-Tacher (2018) agreed that students must have ongoing exposure to groups that are commonly marginalized because it will help to lessen previously held biases and can enable individuals to replace stereotypical views with accurate information.

Chang et al. (2014) noted that the student perspective of service learning while engaging in activities empowered them while also making social change relevant to civic engagement. Action research was done by a software company where students experienced new information and enabled them to witness both corporate and social responsibility practices (Chang et al., 2014). The results were significant on the students' experiences as they have reported the increase of self-motivation while understanding the social problems of the community (Chang et al., 2014). Another study shows a sample of 160 students who attended a secondary school during the academic year 2011-2012 and highlighted the social sensitivity of social problems. The findings revealed how students become interested when asked to comment on the social, personal, and educational

development in the various age group (Ocal & Altinok, 2016). It was evident that service learning supports the personal and social development of students. Interpersonal and motivation skills are principles of character which incorporate both academic and personal interventions into service-learning programs (Simons & Cleary, 2006).

The paths of the citizen were highlighted in the above research, and students agreed that their participation in service learning helped them to be a team player (Shuler, 2010). Furthermore, the students realized the importance of being responsible citizens when they face any social problems in his/her surroundings. The display of active citizenship was seen, while cooperating with the organization in the community and find solutions for the issues that face the community making themselves agent of social change both in thought and expression (Blankson et al., 2015).

Comparative Analysis of Service Learning in Disciplines

By observing in the classroom, educators have emphasized that human services are a pedagogy that is a natural fit for service learning (Madden et al., 2014). In this discipline, students are introduced to the community with which they will be sharing information daily. This platform provides the experience for students who are freshly educated in this area and required the experience to develop and practice the skills that will impact client and agency positively (Madden et al., 2014).

One of the arguments by experts asserts that a single semester is not sufficient for students in a class to actively demonstrate service learning (Holt, 2017). Students need adequate time to explore and think about the different levels of class structure such as race and ethnicity and need the appropriate tools to develop critical thinking which goes

beyond the time in one semester (Holt, 2017). Due to the time constraints in a traditional school, students have a short time to learn about equality issues and will leave such a setting with limited understanding of people in various situations. Therefore, service learning would need an extended time to challenge the assumptions of students and will become valuable to the said student (Holt, 2017).

Fisher et al. (2017) agreed that faculty are skeptical on the education value of service learning and may have no interest to experiment on this topic, knowing it needs a vast amount of time to be invested in making it useful in schools. However, it would be interesting to conduct a study with recent graduates in a specific field to show the level of opportunities that would be available and how they will perform on the job. The results in previous research may not be equally generalized of all students, especially when it comes to gender (Fisher et al., 2017).

Unexpectedly, the number of studies that link to service learning using quantitative approach is limited, and only few can be found that address the first-generation experiences in service learning (Pelco et al., 2014). Brail (2016) accentuated that traditional methods are used to test service learning and measures the achievement of classroom learning; the findings revealed that there is no significant improvement for service learners comparing to non-service learners. Hence, the results showed that service learning is merely focused on qualitative evidence and needs a holistic form of assessment, including quantitative studies, to measure the outcomes (Brail, 2016). A study was conducted to see the comparison of student grades and discovered that using grades is not an effective practice in service learning due to the validity and objectivity of

the methods involved. The studies that are used in quantitative research are customarily based on the student's perceptions rather than a service-learning element that has been studied (Allen, 2005).

Furthermore, the role of group work showed the impact and enhancement of opportunities in service learning while focusing on the outcome. However, educators need to find sufficient time to implement service-learning programs in schools (Kezar, 2002). Students who participate in service learning may not perform better than other students at the end of year examinations (Eyler & Giles, 1999). A study done in 1998 highlighted that service learning may contribute to issues when they are poorly planned and managed. It was also cautioned in the investigation that it could include the emphasizing structure of the community, which reinforces the stereotypic thinking and increased distances from participating in the communities (Eby, 1998).

By using a case study, Moely and Ilustre (2014) illustrated that the available empirical studies are few that show the impact of service learning academically and the literature to support such claims are few in circulation; thus, limit the support of the wider community to support such practices. The studies that showed the effect were mostly conducted in the United States of America and focused on a few selected courses in higher education and based on experience from a single program. The objectives of the course were not achieved and students were likely to achieve a less satisfactory grade (Prentice, 2009)

Schneider et al. (2018) acknowledged the challenges of engaging young people as resources in a nursing program service-learning project. Schneider et al. (2018)

highlighted the moral distress that was displayed both on professors and students alike.

The materials and needs of the community were identified, and participants complained about the lack of time and resources that had been given to complete the project.

Therefore, the students felt responsible for the situation in the community and thus become stressed, especially when they could not assist in the way that is needed.

Schneider et al. (2018) accentuated not only moral stress was included, but also threats to sustainability in the community.

Furthermore, service learning is not often promoted for students who are doing online studies, and schools may lack the expertise to explore this integration (Early & Lasker, 2018). Another challenge with service learning is how investigators characterize this concept, including the definitions and inconsistencies of using this term in schools. With its variations by its very nature, service learning becomes more difficult to understand in a single study. Research findings exposed the various interpretations service learning is referred to; for example, internship, course-based service, and classroom-based service (Cho, 2014). As such, this type of learning is complex and not easily explained, which and can be varied to the schools that implement each project and stipulate a need for researchers to investigate and the outcome may not reflect the actual experiences of students (Cho, 2014). It is recommended that service learning should be voluntary and not a requirement in schools (Storm, 2010)

Service learning is one formal way of blending volunteering and studying and is designed to meet the specific goals of those associated with the degree program (Harrington, 2016). Therefore, the time that is allocated by schools is not acceptable in

the working community. It is also often required for students who are participating in programs such as human services to complete a background check, which requires additional time to be approved by the relevant authorities (Schelbe et al., 2014). Also, Schelbe et al. (2014) stated that this results in a small workspace and insufficient organizational structure which are necessary to support the service-learning arm of the course. The lack of existing knowledge of faculty workload was also seen as a potential drawback to implement service learning, and the studies cannot be generalized beyond the specific assessment of the program.

Postlethwaite (2012) underscored the responsibilities of securing the personnel to do background checks and asked who pays for these services so that the student will be cleared to undertake the task of exploring the project. It is challenging for a known university with a vast number of students required to be placed in a learning experience, while thinking that the community is used as a lab for students which is like exploitation of members (Al Barwani et al., 2013). Notwithstanding the challenges that both faculty and students faced with the correlation between the activity and outcome of service learning, it deemed added challenges to decide how to measure and the best way to evaluate progress. Hence, each school must develop a learning curve, which becomes extremely difficult to assess whether or not a child learned from this experience (Al Barwani et al., 2013).

The study of Kielsmeier et al. (2004) highlighted critical challenges such as continuation of courses in service learning. The authors above noted that they find it difficult to extend these services to schools and core programs in institutions to improve

the learning capacity of students over the past 5 years. These unchanged circumstances contributed to the poor infrastructure, support, and effective implementations of service learning in many schools (Kielsmeier et al., 2004). Some of these pieces of evidence were documented in a study that was conducted by Kielsmeier et al. (2004) which found that two-thirds of schools that offer service learning do not have a written policy that detail the objectives of this style of learning. So, little dedication to financial support is seen at the level to coordinate resources. Guo et al. (2016) had similar results and embraced a change in role transition from service receiver to service provider. Thus, individuals seem to fluctuate in this process, such as the Chinese students whose culture enabled them to engage emotionally, cognitively, and behaviorally in-service learning process (Guo et al., 2016)

Summary and Conclusions

By reviewing the literature, it can be assumed that there is an element of mutual exchange in learning and social interaction that takes place between the service provider and the participants (Pratt & Danyluk, 2017). Hence, service learning has been deemed in providing a variety of learning experiences that can enhance an individual competency (Soong, 2013). With a unique approach to service learning, educators adopted new perspectives that will include culture and diversity. It will encourage individuals to step out of their comfort zones within the learning opportunity (Chambers & Lavery, 2012). Service learning invoked transformative learning and prompts each person to have an open mind and be tolerant of their counterparts in demonstrating critical service learning (St. & Julie, 2014).

The literature that I reviewed promotes student learning through service learning. It helps students to appreciate cultures, reducing stereotypes, and build their confidence through added knowledge which enhances their professional growth in the society. The literature review revealed that service learning assist individuals who have a preconception of an issue and are subjective. By interacting with individuals in the schools and communities, persons can realize that the preconceived ideas are groundless. During this process, it is likely that transformative learning will occur and individuals will improve their multicultural literacy in various capacities (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Singh, 2010).

The literature revealed themes that will assist students to make decisions, builds teamwork, and enhance skills development that did not seem possible before completing this project while working with community partners to ascertain the value of service learning and is supported by existing literature (Colón-Aguirre, 2017 & Rodríguez-Arroyo, 2015). The authors emphasized on the theme of networking and application of skills to real-life experiences. Schelbe et al. (2014) commented on taking action on the issues that the service-learning project addressed while staying involved in community projects beyond the course timeframe (Schneider et al., 2018). The experts have maintained that service learning is useful as a pedagogical strategy for meeting various course outcomes (Krumwiede et al., 2015; Voss et al., 2015; Yoder, 2006), leadership skills, professional and academic development (Cairney, 2015; Hébert & Hauf, 2015; Hegarty & Angelidis, 2015) and fostering a sense of responsible citizens among the youth in various communities (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014).

Although there was literature that outlines graduates in colleges and service-learning experiences, research was limited in examining high school students' perspectives on the role of service learning and employment. Therefore, the need has increased for this study in recognizing that service learning is essential to develop critical skills both locally and internationally. I have found no research that has examined how high school graduates in the Cayman Islands perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing a job postgraduation. After reviewing the literature for this study, I have adopted a case study method to investigate multiple units such as students learning experiences and how employment is influenced by the stakeholder and field activities that students have participated during the years in high school. In Chapter 3, I provide detailed information of the case study, the sample population, role of the researcher, ethical issues, and instrumentation, including the data collection instruments that are used to collect information of the experiences of students.

Chapter 3: Research Method

In this chapter, I describe the qualitative case study approach used to determine graduated students' perspectives of service learning and employment postgraduation. In the following sections, I describe why a qualitative method and case study design were appropriate for this study compared to other methods and designs. I include the purpose of the research project, the role of the researcher, and participants' information. I have included a detailed description of the selected research methodology and design. In this chapter, I give a detailed description of the selected population and sampling strategy along with the data collection method and qualitative data analysis. This section also addresses confirmability, transferability, dependability, and credibility of the study.

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceived effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment, postgraduation, for students in the Cayman Islands. The qualitative case study is used to ask how and why questions; hence, the case study was conducted in its natural context, which is recommended (Yin, 2012). This qualitative case study was associated with ethical issues and consequences participants may encounter during an investigation (Corbin & Morse, 2003). Given the sensitivity of this face-to-face study, interviews were conducted in a safe environment and participants' confidentiality was maintained. Based on elements in a qualitative study, the case study methodology was a suitable method because it can be used to identify feelings, behaviors, and opinions of the participants (Thomas, 2011).

A qualitative study can be used to embrace the perspectives of real-life experiences so individuals can immerse into a distinct cultural setting and sharing firsthand examinations with the subject matter and create an inductive approach to the inquiry (Case et al., 2014). When one studies the degree of qualitative study, it builds a strong potential to provide a highly contextualized description of the phenomenon that interweaves culture and diversity (Case et al., 2014). The qualitative inquiry can be a challenging process. Scholars need to seek advances that promote the highest quality of qualitative studies. Furthermore, valuable insight must be used to analyze the information and the integration of theoretical frameworks (Salmonaa & Kaczynski, 2016).

In this study, I focused on the context of the surrounding conditions while conducting the study, which is recommended by Peterson (2016). The case study design also can be used to make recommendations for a service-learning program in other institutions while focusing on an individual or an organization (Sangster-Gormley, 2013). In Chapter 3, I outline the methodology, the research and design, eligibility of participants, instrumentation, analysis, and ethical procedures that were used in the study, and I conclude with a summary of the research methodology. The following question guided the study: How do graduates perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment postgraduation in the Cayman Islands?

Methodology

I selected a case study design to gather information about service learning and students' perspectives on employment. The case study in this research was appropriate because I identified feelings, behavior, and opinions of the participants within a bounded,

outlined case setting. Thomas (2011) indicated using this methodology helps to translate findings into a format that can be applicable to the situation of each participant and focus on outcomes. A case study is a unique approach to research that concentrates on the study of experiences within a real-life context (Yin, 2012, 2014). This approach is used when focusing on in-depth information while using multiple sources to provide insight into the interaction of specific characteristics (Lindstrom & Benz, 2002; Stake, 1995).

For this study, I employed purposive sampling methods to select participants. Purposive sampling occurs when participants are predetermined and selected as being representative of a larger population (Given, 2008). Purposive sampling involves selecting participations who can provide rich information for study (Oppong, 2013). The case study provided a format that was appropriate when employing both single and multiple collection tools (Etikan, 2016). Hence, the goal of this research was consistent with the goals that Zhi (2014) has investigated and supported in his research.

Three methods are commonly used in research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed. In quantitative research, the researcher collects data from across various organizations and uses critical variables (Fassinger & Morrow, 2013). The quantitative study assumes that predefined variables have the same meaning across different settings (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). In a quantitative study, researchers fail to see the apparent reality but propose variables, statistical parameters, chance, or probabilities (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017). The quantitative approaches use surveys, random sampling, and statistics to test a theory or hypothesis. I did not test a hypothesis or use random sampling for the selected population.

In mixed-method research, the researcher uses elements from qualitative and quantitative design to validate or achieve individual results (Hayes et al., 2013). The mixed method is used when the participant pool is large (Luyt, 2012). However, for this study, I had seven participants. Rather than adapting to a quantitative or mixed-method approach, I choose a qualitative design that was appropriate for this study and would reveal graduates' perceptions of service learning and employment. Qualitative methods provide a better call to action in exploring participants' underlying issues than quantitative results (Kabins, 2016). Graduates were able to tell their stories and attempt to increase the understanding of the perceptions of people in a particular setting (Zyphur & Pierides, 2017).

Qualitative research uses standard designs such as phenomenological and ethnographic approaches. The ethnographic study begins with an open area of inquiry and is discovery driven (Larsson, 2006). The ethnographic researcher uses multiple sources of data collection, such as observation, focus group, and artifact analysis (Damico & Simmons-Mackie, 2003). This design is a written description of a group's culture and is based on what people do or say in a particular context (Hemmings, 2009). I did not observe human beings in a specific culture, nor did I perceive their beliefs, attitudes, or behaviors over an extended period. In a phenomenological study, data are collected through subjective reality and researchers can adopt interview, discussions, or observations as data collection strategies (Qutoshi, 2018). The researcher may also have to conduct several interview sessions with each participant while looking for patterns among the target population under study (Bastug et al., 2017). I did not research a

phenomenon, and therefore a phenomenological study was not appropriate for this research.

Wynn and Williams (2012) stated that case studies are critical to the production of meaningful and new knowledge in a study that offers a vigorous explanation of each case. I chose the case study technique to capture a range of perspectives as opposed to a single view of an individual using a survey (Longhofer et al., 2017). This allowed me to gain a better understanding of the subject at hand and ultimately reduce any potential bias (Yin, 2014). The case study is best to understand the things that matter to people the most in society (Longhofer & Floersch, 2014).

Role of Researcher

It is evident that the role of the researcher is instrumental in generating and interpreting data while conducting studies in qualitative research; this is an important context that is structured in the study. The role that I have played in this study was the interviewer and data collection instrument. As Brinkmann and Kvale (2009) noted, qualitative researchers must present their roles, biases, and preferences in a research study (Brinkmann, & Kvale, 2009). I am a female and was born and raised in the Caribbean. I have been exposed from early days to a diversity of cultures and the need to value experiences while sharing information with the community.

As a scholar, I have contributed to my community regularly. In observing these activities, I realized that throughout each community development includes a society which has a mixed cultural background. I observed that something was missing; therefore, I went in search of the missing component. This process was crucial; it has

allowed me to form a bond and allows me listen to the members of the community in providing alternate solutions to students after college graduation. Sullivan (2005) explained the dimensions of what it means to be a civically oriented professional beyond the technical competence and knowledge expertise that the experts in the various fields typically emphasize. The issues were discovered, and the questions were asked for the need of college students to get engaged with the residents. The thought of the conversation has left me wondering how to link the community to the schools in the Cayman Islands. Hence, I was inspired to spend more time to research this topic by speaking with the professionals in many schools and identify that service learning is vital to schools and must be explored.

In addition, my background in human resources management contextualizes my role in this research. It gives me additional intuition which has shaped me as a scholar and my competence in this area. Graziano and Raulin (2014) asserted that science should be nonjudgmental but often inserts in the descriptions and behaviors of individuals. Hence, the researcher understands the ethical principles in research and avoid biased questions that will encourage a participant to respond in a specific way. As the researcher I am required to listen to each participant, have a strong grasp of the study, and able to adapt to the changing environment to avoid biases (Yin, 2014).

Being an active listener is keen in this role while engaging with the narratives that is shared by the interviewees. By interacting with each participant on a personal level, it required full attention while getting every detail accurately recorded while the interviewee verbally express their thoughts and understandings to construct meaning and

other factors that relate to this process. I worked diligently to narrow the questions that helped to identify the theme in the research. Furthermore, it gives me additional insight to analyze the interviews and practiced the concept of mapping in the current study. I have researched this topic for over a year and am confident with my role in this study being devoid of bias.

Data Collection

Instrument

The interview questions avoided leading language that could influence the participants' responses or vague references of the subject (Lai et al., 2016). I chose open-ended questions because these questions allow for additional issues and ideas to emerge. It was relevant in this study and allowed a free flow of discussion on the issues that deemed important to each participant. The interview guide served to focus and direct the discussion areas. I used member checking to increase both the internal and external validity of qualitative research. Member checking technique is widely used in qualitative research where participants are invited to check or approve the researchers' data or interpretations and are expected to provide feedback on this process (Iivari, 2018). Consequently, I used member checking which is a vital tool to improve credibility and it is a technique that is used to establish trustworthiness (Kornbluh, 2015). See Appendix A for a complete list of the interview questions. I asked all the participants the same questions in the same format.

Informed consent provides an understanding of the study (Creswell, 2014). The consent form contained a clear and detailed description of the research procedures which

allow each participant to review, ask questions, and sign if they agreed to participate in the study. The participants had the opportunity to review the consent form before the interview and were offered a full explanation of having a signed consent form. Each participant indicated that they understood the data collection process, privacy, and confidentiality outlined on the form. Besides, the potential participants understood that their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the study even after the completion of data collection. The voluntary consent form helped to ensure that sufficient information about the study was presented. I reviewed the information with each potential participant, obtained their signature, and each received a copy of the consent form for their records. All questions and concerns were addressed prior to participating in the study. The data collection and analysis process were performed simultaneously and increased participants' understanding of the social issue (Jones & Abes, 2003). It was important to communicate with the participants in the interview and be mindful that each interviewee will bring their perspectives to the interview (Park et al., 2016).

The case study used triangulation; I combined data collection sources to increase the ability to interpret the findings and increase confidence in the research data (Staley et al., 2016). Triangulation offers a detailed description through the document review process and adds value to existing processes in qualitative study (Bretschneider et al., 2017). I reviewed documents that pertain to teachers' training in service learning. The document review was used to locate emergent strategies and activities that gave a robust conclusion on service learning impacts. The use of both the interviews and document review has reduced any potential bias of any one form of data collection method

(Bretschneider et al., 2017). The document review procedure offered a vivid description of the program's organization enriched through the use of data that are collected (Trevisan & Walser, 2015). The guideline was followed in its entirety and demonstrate responsibility to conduct the research.

Sampling and Sampling Procedures

The purposeful sampling involved the use of the following criteria that determined the eligibility of the participants for the study. I researched the schools in the area and found one that includes service learning. Therefore, I made an appointment to speak with the principal and inquire if the school was willing to participate in the study. The principal directed me to the person in charge of the service-learning program. I explained the project to the coordinator and showed her a copy of the interview questions that was asked in the study. A letter of cooperation was signed by the principal before recruiting the participants.

Participants

The coordinator with whom I have consulted has been employed at the institution for over 5 years. She sent the emails to the former students who had the characteristics of my desired sample population after receiving approval from the head of the department. The school sent the email to the former students; it was not seen as junk from the internet users but created a line of communication and trust with me and the participants. I was copied on the emails so that I could follow up with the consent form via this medium. I used the inclusion criteria for graduates to participate in my study. First, they had been involved in service learning for at least one semester. Second, the participants had been

enrolled in the institution within the last 4 years; and last, the participants were at least 18 years of age.

I anticipated approximately a pool of 15 graduates to accept the email invitation and fit the above criteria. Smaller samples are sufficient in qualitative studies and samples that are too large should be avoided to make analysis time effective. Hence, obtaining as little as six interviews can reach data saturation (Guest et al., 2006). A sample of ten participants was expected to reach saturation in this study. Fusch and Ness (2015) acknowledged that the designs are not universal to reach saturation in a study. Hence, a researcher has the responsibility to determine when there is adequate information to replicate the study. Guest et al. (2006) further stated that the general principle in reaching saturation in a study is when there are no new data, themes, coding, and the ability to replicate the study. From the pool of 15, I used my judgment and eight graduates responded on a first-come first-served basis to participate in the study and were both male and female.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, I organized the data thematically after rereading the interview transcripts and noting the various ideas. Hence, the documents were coded by using line by line and applied to the entire dataset. This technique assists to gain insightful information about the participant and the situation. The nature of coding was a necessary tool for handling raw data. I used a template that began with a set of thematic codes based on the literature (Jeffries et al., 2017). I created these priori codes based on the literature and my RQ, as these are assessed for their ability to capture each of the

codes identified in the literature. It was also in line with the topic and focused objectives of the study.

In addition, I used emergent codes that became evident with trends in the data (Isa- Modibbo et al., 2016). I created a new coding category that extract information provided by the participants; by using this process, several emergent themes were developed from the information. I reviewed and verified the emergent codes. Therefore, the emergent codes described the content or categories of these experiences (Nambiar et al., 2014). I stayed alert to ensure that the text is adequately judged in relate to the themes that was developed. As the data were collected, the transcripts were analyzed, and I created field notes and text to reveal the emerging patterns that was further explored. Field notes were used to triangulate other research findings in the study and highlighted the aspects that need further investigation (Roberts et al., 2019).

The field notes were coded word by word and identified patterns visually in the data; this is keeping with the approach of Miles (2014). Subsequently, the transcriptions were collected and was read, re-read, and divided into units that were characterized by the researcher (O'Reilly & Parker, 2012; Walker, 2012). I continued this process until the existing codes accounted for all variation in the data, and no new information was being collected (Guest et al., 2006). Coding is the link between collecting and developing the method to explain the data. Therefore, for this study, I used line by line approach, which was Corbin and Strauss's (2008) model in creating open codes based on themes coded in the data. This process reflected the unique voices and experiences of the participants. At

the end of the research, I presented the general statements and themes that emerged from the coded text and trends in the data.

I have experience with NVivo and I used this program to help me organize codes, which I categorized into categories and themes. I used NVivo Version 12 plus; this software is user-friendly and gave me the support I need which made it easier to use and can import data from multiple sources. The themes from the experiences of the participants were discovered from their interviews.

In a community, awareness allows the participant to identify a societal issue and want to do something about this problem. Therefore, the participant focused on activities to promote student learning in the community. Besides, accepting change was also identified in the literature review where individuals build relationships to understand each similarity and difference and how they can work as a team and allows individuals to view the world as an outsider and this helps them to find new ways in making a change.

In the findings, I engaged in the triangulation process in collecting the data to enhance the validity of the study. Carter et al. (2014) agreed with Patton (1990) when referring to triangulation as using multiple data sources to develop a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative study. The data triangulation process involved reviewing teachers' training documents and reflection products such as journals for service learning. The different sources helped identify commonality among the findings and used triangulation to gain meaning through multiple approaches (Patton, 2015). The journals contained an observation checklist for each period. Teachers moved freely in the classroom and observed each student's learning. The final class projects were used to

assessed student learning after participating in service-learning projects. The review of these documents supported the interview's conclusions, which verified that service learning provided a variety of learning opportunities for students and identified patterns across each program. Service-learning benefits captured during the seven interviews matched up quite well with the findings generated through the document review process. Similarly, Carpenter (2014) supported triangulation through document review approaches. The information in the teacher's training documents endorsed the concept that students learn from hands-on experience and is crucial in providing an environment that enhanced employability.

The research findings from the research during the initial stage of the study including the interviews, analysis, and audio-recordings of the interviews were brought together in action to improve the recruitment process of the study (Rooshenas et al., 2019). Hence, it is essential to analyze information and employs the best approach that will give a broader impact on the study and not limited. Therefore, different strategies were used in getting information from the group as well as field notes. It was vital to include other methods in this study because it demonstrates the weakness and strength of the topic which turns out to be a valuable strategy to validate the findings.

Reliability and Validity

Validity and reliability of research are crucial elements to provide evidence of the quality of the study in the results (Hayashi et al., 2019). The validity in qualitative research can be described in various terms such as rigor, quality, and trustworthiness. The reliability element assesses the consistency of the results over a specific time and

entrenched with a notion of stability (Hayashi et al., 2019). Lincoln and Guba (1985) outlined that trustworthiness is the central issue that is called validity and reliability in research. The above authors further proposed that credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are specific criteria to be used as the guideline to trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Trustworthiness entails an evaluation of various criteria that constitute trust and will act responsibly in shaping a relationship. It is crucial to understand the process of trust formation and the factors that facilitate this process through credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability.

Credibility

In addition, a researcher was attentive to detail such as the data collection and evaluation so that the audience will trust the results knowing the standard of the investigation. To ensure credibility, the transcript can independently read and coded by researchers and arrived at an agreed coding structure (Cruz & Tantia, 2017). Credibility is critical in the research process to ensure that the study is believable by the audience and the participants who provide the data, which will confirm the truth of a participant's account (Munn et al., 2014). I used a transcript review technique so that participants could verify the accuracy of their transcript, thus enabling a trust relationship between the researcher and the participants (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). Member checking is widely used in qualitative research and is relevant for obtaining the participant approval for using extracts from the case study (Thomas, 2017). The interpretations of the data back to the participants is a crucial technique for establishing credibility.

I arranged an informal follow up interview so the participants could check the accuracy of the transcript and I asked them whether the description was realistic and the interpretations are fair and accurate in the study. This allowed them to confirm or disconfirm any aspects of the study (Candela, 2019). This was done over 2 weeks and I presented the actual report to them before presenting the research on any other platform. Spending quality time to collect and interact with the data also increases credibility (Forero et al., 2018). Using field notes demonstrates reflexivity by staying focused on the data and addressing any bias (Edwards, 2016). In addition, since meaning is relevant in qualitative research, I negotiated interpretation and meaning generation with each participant via member checking so the participants validated the transcript.

Confirmability

In this qualitative study, I educated the audience on the various levels to which the results make sense and can be replicated by others. Hence, I conducted the research responsibly and ensured that from the inception of the study, I paid keen attention to the decisions, including ethical issues. Wester (2011) indicated that, from the onset of the research process, a researcher must be conscious of ethical issues that may arise, which can influence the confirmability of the research. This includes the appropriate selection of sample sizes and summaries of field notes. Drisko (1997) also indicated that researchers' effort to affirm interpretations from primary sources will enhance confirmability. The provision of extensive original data and established valid codes from direct interaction with participants helps to corroborate research findings. Hence, the audit trail is a technique that was used in this study to record the research steps from beginning to end

(Barusch et al., 2011). Furthermore, it is critical to emphasize ethical standards such as honesty in conveying information correctly. The sample was relevant and represent the phenomenon that is being studied.

Furthermore, the field notes and memos were essential because it demonstrates the strength or thoroughness of the research. Also, it has provided a clear description of the data collection and procedures used in the investigation so that individuals can understand the issue. The confirmability process showed that the findings from the study are produced from the participants or observers and not from the imagination of the researcher. Even though I was the primary instrument to conduct the interview; external sources can audit the data. To subject all assumptions, decisions, and actions in this study, it was critical to use the same assessment with other instrument to demonstrate that the data can be confirmed as stipulated in the research design (Raskind et al., 2019).

Transferability is necessary to validate research; Ravitch and Carl (2016) emphasized that qualitative research should be viewed from a broader context while maintaining the richness of the study. Conversely, researchers have aimed to achieve the transferability in the study so that the audience can used elements of the study of replicating the design or findings in different settings (Billot et al., 2017; Houghton et al., 2013). Subsequently, transferability captured several sound principles of the study and provided evidence to the reader in assessing the integrity of the research (Cope, 2014). Furthermore, to demonstrate transferability, Forero et al. (2018) agreed that the researcher ensures that the recruitment and selection sample is based on expert knowledge, and the individuals who are participating in the study are well aware of the

phenomenon examined. The researcher must have knowledge of which is to be transferred (Hellström, 2008). Thus, the transferability is critical in the communicative process of the research.

The method that I chose was suitable to answer the research question; therefore, dependability can be established. Munn et al. (2014) asserted that dependability can be established in a study when the process is logical and can be traced. Shenton (2004) agreed that dependability can improve the trustworthiness of qualitative data by making it feasible in using similar techniques to obtain same results. Also, audit trails are relevant for other researchers to evaluate. Thus, it is crucial in handling different methodology for analyzing the data so that the research design will support this analysis. Also, I have created a data collection plan over the period in preparation for the research. Hence, the research question allowed me to construct a design that was key in achieving dependability in the study.

Ethical Procedures

The research was ethically evaluated, and I established relationships of trust and created documents that will protect the participants' identities. I documented their rights before the study commence and allow each to withdraw if they are not comfortable with the setting (Schaefer & Wertheimer, 2010). Ethics played a critical role in cultivating trustworthiness in research. In qualitative research, the researcher must conduct themselves in an ethical manner throughout the course of the study especially when collecting data and documentation. It involves working closely with the participants and this will involve the intricacies of cultural norms, values, and behaviors (Mertens, 2018).

Qualitative analysis is based on strategies to ensure trustworthiness and credibility which are critical in doing research. Qualitative research requires training and competency in an area (Hoffman, 2010). In this study, all participants were volunteers; voluntariness is vital in making the study valid and reliable (Kýlýnç & Fırat, 2017). The participants were given sufficient information about the research so they can make a voluntary choice (Olsaretti, 2008). Besides, the American Psychological Association (APA) (2002) outline a broader aspect of ethical procedures when asking participants to take part in the research. The right to decline and withdraw during a study is described in this manual. The manual also gives additional insight into the confidentiality, the potential risk, and provide the opportunity for participants to ask questions and receive the answers (APA, 2002). The participants were aware that they can withdraw at any time and can contact me by email or phone. The participants had the right to answer specific questions without compromise of care (Hammer, 2017). Researchers should keep confidential information off the record (Lahman et al., 2015). Confidentiality forms were distributed, and I will be held accountable for all information that were given by participants. These are stored in a locked safe while the recordings are stored in a file that is accessible by password. I kept these files as recommended by the law, and at the time for disposal, a professional shredding company will destroy them. The participants were given a choice to choose between using a pseudonym and one's actual name (Mukungu, 2017). I explained to the participants how the pseudonyms will be used and asked that each participant choose their pseudonym in line with ethical requirements. However, numerical identifiers were used so that the participant's identity will be kept confidential.

Hence, I ensured that these elements are evident in the investigation, planned, and executed carefully.

Summary

A qualitative case study was the most appropriate design to perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment and post graduation in the Cayman Islands. The qualitative case study was adequate to investigate this complex social phenomenon in its real environment. The data were collected from graduates and subjected to thematic analysis identifying practices and opportunities for improvement in the workplace. The semi-structured interview guide was revised so that participants can express their views in private. The data were gathered and analyzed any other findings that have emerged from the notes. As is customary in a qualitative study, I continued sampling strategy until theoretical saturation was reached, which I found no new concepts that emerged from the interviews conducted. Participants focused on the context while understanding the experiences; hence, I collected nonverbal data. An interview guide was the most cost-effective method and ran approximately 23 minutes for each participant. I received thorough responses that lead to detailed data and revealed the story that represented the meaning of the investigated issue at hand. The interview guide outlined the protocol to be followed, including a preamble discussing confidentiality issues in the research and the consent with the participant describing that they can withdraw at any time without prejudice or bias from the interviewer. The information related to IRB approval, unforeseen changes to the research plan, data collection, data analysis, and conclusions, along with an applicable sample of interviewee responses are

presented in Chapter 4. Interpretation of the results of the study, limitations, recommendations, as well as future research and implications, are included in Chapter 5.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceived effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment postgraduation for students in the Cayman Islands. In this chapter, I present the findings germane to the research question. This chapter also highlights themes that emerged from the open-ended interviews and the document review of service learning at the school. The overall conclusions of the outcomes are also summarized. The research inquiry was delineated in the question: How do graduates perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment postgraduation in the Cayman Islands? The target population was graduates from a high school in the Cayman Islands. The analysis of case study data, which included an open-ended question as well as a review of documents from the institution, is presented in this chapter. Documents reviewed included student handbooks, teaching materials, and training materials for teachers.

Settings

I received IRB approval on April 20, 2020 (IRB approval # 04-09-20-0470024). For this study, I developed a partnership with a private Cayman Islands school that includes a service-learning component in its curriculum. All participants consented to participation in the study and asked no questions about participation. The school initially offered a boardroom for the purpose of conducting the interviews but could not follow through because of the intervening COVID-19 crisis. Consequently, interviews were conducted by through Zoom, an online conferencing tool, courtesy of IRB. The school's study coordinators arranged transmission of invitations and consent forms, including all

relevant information, to enrolled students and graduates, respectively. In doing so, the school created a partnership between the school and the community.

Presentation of the Findings

Demographics

Fifteen graduates were invited to participate in the study. Among the eight who accepted, one was disqualified based on study criteria. In order to maintain anonymity, participants were not required to furnish any form of demographic or characteristic information except age and gender (see Table 1). To further ensure the confidentiality of participants, each was assigned a numerical identifier as follows: Participant 1, Participant 2, Participant 3, Participant 4, Participant 5, Participant 6, and Participant 7. Participants will be referred to by numerical identifier throughout the remainder of this document.

Table 1

Demographics

Participants	Sex	Age
Participants 1	Female	21
Participants 2	Female	23
Participants 3	Female	22
Participants 4	Female	22
Participants 5	Male	22
Participants 6	Female	23
Participants 7	Male	23

Data Collection

Participants were selected based on inclusion criteria as outlined in Chapter 3. Inclusion criteria specified that they must have graduated from a high school in the 4

years prior to the study; enrolled for at least one semester in the service-learning program; attained the age of 18 and be no older than 25 years; and experienced service learning during the prior 4 years.

The study's invitation period extended from April 26, 2020, to May 1, 2020. The participants received the invitations from the partner organization on April 26, 2020, and began returning the consent forms on the same day. Due diligence was applied to ensure that participants were eligible to participate as of April 27, 2020. During this stage, one participant who did not meet the criteria for the study was disqualified. Interviews were conducted during the period from April 27, 2020, to May 6, 2020, through the Zoom online video communication medium; in-person face-to-face interviews were not possible due to COVID-19. This means of communication was approved by IRB. Similarly, graduates were accommodated at times convenient to them because most were working from home while performing childcare and other family duties.

Some technical difficulties, such as low Internet bandwidth and limited microphone functionality issues, were encountered in the first interviews conducted on April 28. Many participants experienced problems with Zoom audio; however, these issues were resolved within the anticipated 30-minute time set for completion of the interview.

Participant 1 graduated in 2018 and at the time of the interview had been employed for 3 years by one of the leading firms in the Cayman Islands. Given her work schedule, the interview was conducted in the evening after working hours. She had been

enrolled in service learning for 2 years while in high school. The interview lasted for 26 minutes.

Participant 2 had been employed for more than 2 years, having graduated in 2017. Participant 2 owns a consulting firm and first experienced service learning in middle school. Participant 2 is now an advocate for underprivileged children. In her 13-minute interview, Participant 2 reported that when she started the service-learning program, she did not like it because it involved going in the community and because she did not think it was relevant to her education. After unwillingly participating a couple of times, however, the experience changed her perspective: “I left school with a love for this subject area,” Participant 2 said. “I missed it so much after graduation that I have now become an expert service-learning practitioner.”

Participant 3, graduated in 2016, and is presently in college where she is participating in service-learning activities. Further, she reported that her selection of her college courses was influenced by her high school experience in service learning. During her 22-minute interview, Participant 3 reflected on her high school experience that involved little beyond minimum requirements for community service hours during Grades 9 to 12. In addition, she did not think the school did adequate tracking of students’ reported service activities: “I had some friends who, you know, they just went to their parent’s office and did filing and I do not think that is service learning in any form.”

Participant 4 currently serves as vice-president for a local 4H Club, which funds service-learning programs. These programs fall under the umbrella of the Cayman Islands

Junior Achievement program that aims to inspire and assist Generation Z to align classwork with various professional bodies. Participant 4, whose first experience of service learning was in high school, is now actively involved in service learning at an overseas college where she is pursuing a master's degree in social science. In her service-learning activities, she and others involved developed a model for service learning in schools and are currently engaged in its implementation in a rural middle school. The interview lasted for 19 minutes.

The fifth interviewee, Participant 5, graduated from high school in 2017, was later transferred to a 4-year degree program in law, and is now an articulated clerk in a large law firm. Since his service-learning experience in high school, another opportunity arose as a director in a new not-for-profit organization, an invitation that Participant 5 accepted without reservation. Participant 5 also volunteers at the Cayman Islands Humane Society, an opportunity that enhances his perspective on life, evolving since he attended high school he said during his interview. In addition to these new service opportunities, he has been introduced to many other service-learning programs since he left high school. The interview lasted for 17 minutes.

The sixth interview was with a 2018 high school graduate. Participant 6 is presently working full time and pursuing a bachelor's degree overseas. In her 10-minute interview she spoke about service learning in high school and how it could be done differently. Participant 6 insisted that based on the way it was presented she perceived it as a mere checkmark to graduation, and accordingly earned the grade. "It was not a

fulfilling experience in high school,” she said, but that her experiences since then had changed her outlook:

During college and while working with government, service-learning activities have had a real impact on me; I have recently created a club that gives back to the community, and I am now hoping to serve the community through relevant employment in a public or private entity.

The final interviewee, Participant 7, lives overseas and has been working fulltime as a career coach at a prominent company for the past year since completing his degree. During the 20 minutes interview, he said, that service learning helped him to secure employment right after college and finds pleasure in being the bridge between his company and the community. During his tenure in high school, Participant 7 was the deputy head boy, with special responsibility for communicating with various entities outside of school that needed support or funding on their community programs. In addition, in his capacity as deputy head boy he served on the board of the student council, which sought to secure meaningful projects for his younger peers in the middle school. As a result, he has had the opportunity to himself participate in many community service opportunities while attending high school in the Cayman Islands and since graduating. The experience, said Participant 7, has given him a positive outlook on life: “I guess it made me appreciative of where I have come from and how I have been raised.”

Evidence of Trustworthiness

According to Yin (2013), to assure the accuracy and trustworthiness of this qualitative research, four research methods should be observed: credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Contributing to achieving these goals, Zoom is a reliable online conference tool, and the audio was of high quality. The graduates were all informed that they would have access to the transcribed interview. The assurance of access to the interview transcripts provided some comfort to interviewees since they would inevitably disclose information about the school and they would be afforded an opportunity to check the resulting script for accuracy.

Credibility

Once the data were gathered from each participant, it was thoroughly reviewed to get an accurate and full view of each case. Achieving credibility in this study was accomplished through the complying with the specific instructions during the data collection phase and in the subsequent analysis (Cope, 2014). Prior to analysis, I listened attentively to the audio recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcription. The themes were carefully documented, while identifying the patterns, as data saturation increases the validity of research (Dworkin, 2012; Yin, 2013). Further, the data will be publicly available to all stakeholders as Yin (2013) argued that transparency is critical at this stage.

Dependability

To ensure dependability, the same questionnaire was used for each graduate and the same interview protocols were applied in all cases. To set the stage for the interview, the questions were sent to participants for review and the process explained. Further, any participant issues or concerns were clarified prior to conducting the interview. Additional clarification was further offered throughout the interview to adapt to, and gain an

understanding of, the uniqueness of the circumstances of each graduate. Patterns and themes relevant to the research questions were identified. An audit trail was initiated during the study, as recommended by (Nowell et al., 2017).

Transferability

Gunawan (2015) asserts that qualitative results are transferable and can be applied to other sampling populations. To assist the academic field in assessing transferability of this study, quotes from the population sample, in their exact words, as suggested by Yin (2013), were included when reporting participant experiences.

Confirmability

A conscious effort was made to ensure that the participants did not influence the interviewer or vice versa. Both maintained a professional relationship throughout the interview process, in alignment with the process of reflexivity advocated by Yin (2013). In accordance, the interview techniques were designed to maintain a bias free process. Also, the procedures followed in this study strengthened confirmability and demonstrated that all the information is data driven, enhancing the accuracy and trustworthiness of this study. The conclusions can therefore be judged as accurate, and, based on managing the management of interpretation error and bias, confirmability, as substantiated by Cope (2014) and Yin (2013), has been achieved.

Data Analysis

The interviews of the participants were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then coded. The partner organization had secured a room on site to conduct the interviews, but due to COVID-19, IRB had approved use of the Zoom online conference app to conduct

the interviews. This platform also offers an option to record the interview. The interviews were conducted in my home office, which was locked and very private. No one was able to access this room while the interviews were being conducted. The average time for the participants' interviews was 20 minutes, during which they answered a total of 12 questions. Immediately on completion of interviews, NVivo was used to transcribe the recording, while information was still fresh in the recorder's mind. According to QSR international (2020), NVivo is "The Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) PC programming unit, which is created by QSR International. NVivo permits specialists to sort, assess, and discover key knowledge components into unstructured or subjective information, for example, interviews, open-ended responses questions, journal articles, online networking, and web content that require profound explanatory details.

Using NVivo, therefore, saved a significant amount of time compared to a manual process. I used line-by-line comparison with the audio from the recorded interviews. Once transcribed, the interview texts were emailed to the participants for review and accuracy check. At this point, I opted to subscribe to the free trial of NVivo 12 Plus to familiarize myself with the data collection tool. I allowed 3 days for review before uploading them to NVivo 12 Plus. As I reviewed, I noticed emerging patterns, and I could identify the general trends in the themes and categories. These patterns and trends afforded additional insight into code using NVivo 12 Plus software. After seven interviews, no new information emerged, achieving saturation (Dworkin, 2012; Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Therefore, no further interviews were needed.

Codes, Categories, and Themes

The assigned numerical identifier for participants designed to protect anonymity and privacy was maintained throughout coding. Manually coding the data before using NVivo helped in familiarization with the data and with the generation and refining of initial coding, given its iterative process (Yin, 2009). The audio files were subsequently uploaded to NVivo for transcription. The auto code feature of NVivo contributed to a better understanding of the interplay of this tool with interviews and answers, enabling, for example, thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2014), thereby closely linking themes to data (Patton, 2002). Upon further coding, categorization, and identification of themes, four main themes emerged: partnership within the community is critical; development of social and leadership skills facilitates student development; service-based projects are educational; and service learning builds career and networking opportunities in the community.

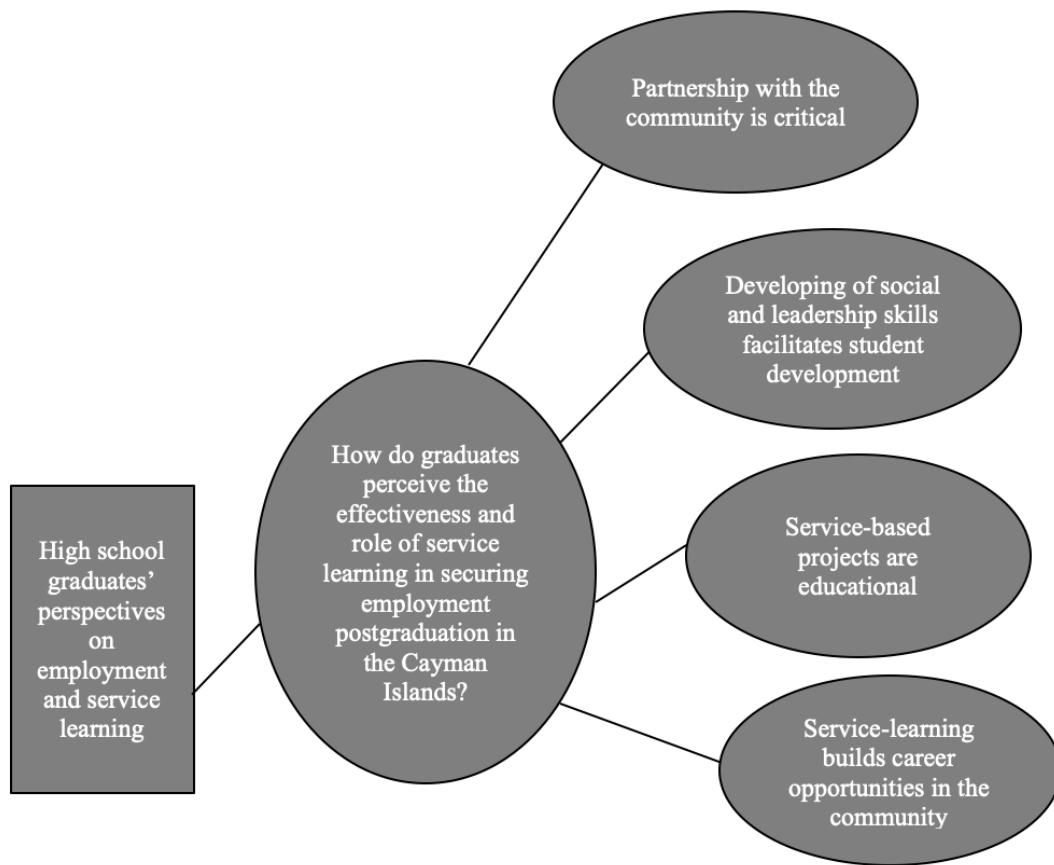


Figure 1. Themes flow chart.

Table 2

Themes, Meaning, and Example Evidence

Themes	Meaning	Example Evidence
Partnership with the community is critical	The main goal in service learning is to create a partnership with our members of the community. Partnering with the community assists in developing the outcomes of each course	Participant 1 has been employed for 2 years in a prominent firm. The company is engaged in the community and allows the employees to assist with various projects annually.
Developing social and leadership skills facilitates student development	Group work helps to develop interpersonal skills. The traits develop from service learning always desirable within an employee	Participant 5 is an articulated clerk who spent 4 years overseas and spoke about the importance of organizing groups to build skills. He acknowledged that helping others assist with developing skills that transpose to employment
Service-based projects are educational	It was evident in the data that organizing community projects with different nonprofit organizations creates a mindset to serve. The beautification projects revolve around both private and public entities	Participant 6 is a recent graduate and now pursuing higher education. She gets to appreciate service-learning projects and recently created a club that gives back to the community. Her ultimate goal is to serve the community through relevant employment in a public or private entity
Service learning builds career and networking opportunities in the community	The data revealed that service learning helped to guide graduates and narrow down employments in choosing an ideal career	The third participant presently attends college, but has completed many internships in the big five firms locally. She spoke about different opportunities that arise from service-learning projects and spend 3 years in this setting. She agreed that service learning helps her to participate in various international projects including the United Nations in Canada. Having this exposure assist in having a career in a nonprofit organization

Results

Theme 1: Partnerships With the Community Is Critical

The first theme that emerged from the data collection was partnership with the community. Participant 1 interview was notable for its emphasis on the theme of partnering with the community and how this relationship assisted in forging the outcomes of each course. To begin, this participant reiterated how serving in the community help to take control of her overall experiences as an emerging adult. For this reason, Participant 1 said, “Service learning must be implemented in all high and middle schools.” Participant 1 further explained that “the main goals in service learning is to create a partnership with our members of the community.” This enabled participants and the community to know and understand each other on a personal level. As a result, Participant 1 said, she found that “[t]hey will also assist us regardless of the challenges we have completing a project.”

Participant 5 revealed how partnerships helped to identify what is lacking in the community and how needs can be met within the community. By engaging in service-learning partnerships, “[s]tudents get early opportunity to give back to their community while taking part in various field trips that are organized by the partner organization.” Meanwhile, Participant 7 said “[m]y employer currently does a lot in the area of raising funds for a lot of foundations, from anything from cancer research to local food banks and other needs.” He spoke about how critical it is that companies connect with the community, especially during the holidays, adding that international companies could reach out to networks in and outside of the territory: local companies, he said, “can create

ongoing relationships by reaching out to local representatives in the United States or other entities in the Cayman Islands.”

Participant 7 also related that students in service-learning activities are often inspired by stories of peer experiences with community partners while completing projects, including how they strive to make their first impressions towards securing an internship in the organization. These concepts are aligned with experiential learning that have increasingly become standard facets of schools’ curricula (Fougère et al., 2020). In this study, too, participants agreed that they “learned to do by doing,” while creating lifelong goals, which is, in turn, beneficial to companies globally. Besides, all seven participants perceived that partnership with a community organization while in school is helpful in securing employment after graduation.

With regard to this theme, I have concluded that service learning, combined with community partnerships, facilitates the practicing of important skills for students who collaborate with relevant recognized international programs. In my research, both graduates and community members benefitted from these experiences—in the case of graduates, the skills that they developed proved applicable to their lives and careers well beyond high school. In fact, the continuation of these partnerships seemed to provide students with focused community-based experiences auguring for greater success in their adult years. Of particular note, the service-learning elements helped students join forces with local community members to address community issues. For example, Participant 7 spoke about connecting with local organizations that needed assistance in soliciting funds to build a food bank for the needy

Theme 2: Developing Social and Leadership Skills Facilitates Student Development

The second theme that materialized was that of developing social and leadership skills. Participant 4 advanced the view that service learning teaches responsibility, creativity, accountability, and integrity, all attributes that contribute to social and leadership skills. These skills were reinforced in service-learning activities in schools when they tailor the curricula, ensure culmination of activities involved in community projects, and exercise some surveillance over supervisors' role in ensuring that the objectives are met. Participant 1 agreed that by and large this model was being emulated in schools: "Each task that we do in the community is aligned with the subjects that we are presently doing in school, and the teachers ensure we do what is required, and that we are equipped with the necessary skills."

Teamwork was identified as an important facet of social and leadership skills by Participant 5, who said that it was "reassuring" to work as a team and that "[o]ne of the accomplishments in service learning is to work effectively as a team." Working alongside team members, Participant 5 said, demonstrates how you can compromise and be a strong leader. For her part, Participant 2 explained how service learning contributed to social development: "We were given group work to develop our interpersonal skills and the teachers provide resources to assist us, while instructing on how working together contribute to successful companies globally." Meanwhile, Participant 3 declared that "the relationships that we developed while in school were the most enjoyable ones and ones that we still treasure today."

For her part, Participant 5 articulated how service learning contributes to social awareness: “You get to kind of understand everyone else’s needs and what the purpose is,” said, adding that these skills directly equip students for employment. Participant 6, too, perceived the connections, concluding “that nobody is unimportant—everybody plays a crucial role—so teamwork is super important in-service learning.” Participant 1, too, mentioned the social facets, in reflecting: “At first joining the group seems awkward and many find it difficult to complete the required assignment. But the group usually come together and assist so that the project is completed and ready for grading,” she said, adding: “With all the uniquely different personalities.... and even though we did not know each other before the assigned project, it ends up really cool.” Participant 1 says that today in the work world she still finds these skills helpful: “In my job, I still use [some of these strategies] in introductions for my team and [I find they continue to] reinforce their ability to work with various [team members] and to complete any task that is required by our manager.”

On the other hand, Participant 6 did not like group work initially but came to appreciate its value: “Although it was painful sitting in some of these classes, it turns out it was a worthwhile decision to develop the hands-on skills that I did not have before joining this class.” Participant 2 explained that at the time of joining the service-learning club she “did not have any prior knowledge of business knowledge,” adding: “I remember one of the course goals was to [be initiated into] management skills that are used in running a charitable organization. I was like, oh my,” she said expressing her

reluctance, “I am obligated to learn these skills—I have to work with the management of the organization to understand clients and the activities of managers daily.”

The findings align with the literature regarding graduates developing a wide range of skills from service-learning activities. Some of the skills that they pinpointed were public speaking, team building, and organizing. All of these skills are rated as essential to most areas of endeavor in the working world. Beyond that, service learning exposes students to crucial civic engagement skills that are forged and refined in the local environment. The development of all of these skills have therefore been widely held to have long-term impact on both the school, the students, and the community.

Theme 3: Service-Based Projects are Educational

Participant 4 spoke to the value of service-based projects to her career growth: “As then vice president for Junior Achievement, [I] explored the business of accounting and entrepreneurship, which greatly influenced my [subsequent career]in finance, and my understating of the ramifications of running a business.” Participant 7, too, believed that “service learning helps to develop skills,” adding: “I didn’t know that I could do so many things, and it helped me to be more creative and take pride in what I do.” Besides, Participant 7 said, “service learning teaches me to appreciate people of color and show empathy to my co-workers.”

Regarding service learning’s role in his accounting career choice and development, Participant 7 said that as a high school student, he “hated math with a passion,” but added: “I was encouraged to participate in the service-learning project for the semester and it was shocking to see how I could create a budget for the Girl Scouts

club. Amazingly, [today] I am employed as a junior accountant and planning to continue school in fall 2020 to get a bachelors in accounting.” Looking back on her initiation into service-based projects in high school, Participant 3 reflected that students “didn’t have clear guidelines with these projects,” but that they nevertheless discovered their real interests and developed their strengths in a variety of areas. Jokingly, Participant 6 said, “I can say that the service-based project created this mindset without my knowing.”

In an important aspect of personal growth, Participant 7 acknowledged that during high school he learned much about the culture and the history of the Cayman Islands, especially through his involvement in service-based projects in eco-tourism and community beautification. Overall, Participant 7 said, schools offer a great example of how service-based projects can be helpful in assessing community needs, proposing that service-based projects in schools have the potential of serving nationally as a reliable data resource on community needs.

Meanwhile, Participant 4, who relied on the Service-Learning Centre at the school to assist her in securing a service-based project, noted that the center creates ongoing relationship with agencies in the community and is committed to involving students as volunteers each semester. Participant 4 confirmed: “We had plenty of opportunities to engage with agencies [in service-based projects], but we sometimes found it challenging to accommodate them in our schedules, as these are done during the course time.” While the schools appeared to offer an adequate pool of information on available service organizations, three of the study participants suggested that the students could choose to build a team and themselves solicit service-based ideas from nonprofit organizations

through the respective service-learning coordinator. However, five of the participants were satisfied with the methods that the teachers used to arrange service-based projects, particularly as selections are aligned with the curricula of the various participating school departments.

Speaking about managing the day-to-day experiences, nevertheless, Participant 1 verified that students were given some autonomy in solving concerns and issues: “If we encountered any issues during the semester, we had to deal with them because we were told that [it served to prepare us for] how we managed in our individual careers when we graduated from high school.” Service-based projects also hold the potential of becoming life-long hobbies and bases for community involvement. As Participant 2 confirmed, it can be a long-term commitment. “One perfect example is creating a project that is aligned with our art, biology, and English curricula by either planting a garden, building bowls or teaching students in primary schools to read.” This, of course, is in line with the experiential theory, that of learning by doing (Niehm et al., 2015).

This theme denotes that the graduates in my study developed citizenship skills and a sense of social responsibility as a direct outcome of their involvement in activities designed to engender these positive social values. Service-learning activities require commitment to service, engagement in academic learning, and application of knowledge in a real-world setting. Service learning is therefore a classic example of the theory of education expounded by American philosopher Dewey. Indeed, Dewey would no doubt have supported service learning as an ideal hands-on approach to learning, enabling students to interact with their environment in order to adapt and learn.

This was particularly so because of the degree of responsibility that fell to the students for implementing and sustaining the projects. This degree of engagement required students to participate and even lead educational activities to address gaps in community social needs as addressed by participants. Service learning is also proving to be a crucial factor in choices that students make for higher education. It was evident from the study that graduates had eye-opening experiences that in some cases led them to careers that they had little imagined or conceived, leading to whole new areas of pursuit in higher education as explained by the respondents

Theme 4: Service Learning Builds Career and Networking Opportunities in the Community

In speaking about service-learning influence on career opportunities, Participant 3 shared with excitement:

“It definitely has like 100 percent. Like I’ll probably talk a bit about this one, but like especially in university, I did two or three major sorts of service learning sort of assignments and opportunities that really helped guide me and narrow down my employments, sort of my ideal career. I actually had a class in university in my third year that was called like a field experience course. The goal was essentially to find sort of a nongovernmental organizations (NGO) or not-for-profit [agency] in my city and work there and have this service-learning opportunity and apply it to the stuff we have done in our classroom. I ended up working for a branch of the United Nations and in Canada which opened up all these doors for me and helped me network. It also helps me to realize how many departments there are in the U.N. and how many countries I can work

in. It made me realize that you can help your community while still actually having a career and making a profit and making a living. So that was probably the most influential one.”

However, Participant 4, was not sure if participating in service learning had a huge impact on navigating the job market. Nevertheless, she felt if students were able to go into the community more, they would have a firmer grasp coming out of high school about what the community would have to offer them in terms of jobs. On the other hand, Participant 5 considered service learning as an essential element to future careers, saying that, in his case, “As an articulated clerk, you look at how you can impact other people, which is a fundamental aspect of your job.” Participant 5 explained: “I was able to satisfy people’s needs in the community by means of a career in the field of law helping to make client’s life simpler. When I was looking at what to do, this was one aspect that I looked for a professional career.”

Participant 3 expanded on the influence on service learning on careers. “It is certainly a good way to explain to potential employers or advisors what I am capable of doing,” Participant 3 reflected, adding: “So, I would say, yes, it’s the number one thing that helped me get internships and employment.” Similarly, Participant 1 agreed that participating in service learning allows individual to choose a career from an early stage. “This way, you can work with various organizations and get the chance to meet people,” she said. Participant 2, meanwhile, has been involved in service learning for approximately 2 years, and was pleased with its impact on career opportunities. “You are letting companies know that you are a hard worker and if they are impressed, they] will

offer a job when the participant completes high school.” Thus, showing interest in service learning and participating in the various projects do create an advantage over other students who do not participate in service-learning projects.

Participant 1 similarly shared that there was a strong link between service learning and her career choice: “Service learning helps me to choose a career that I love.”

Participant 1 said that her approach was to “try various projects and see how well I have done in it” to determine if she should continue. In line with this, Participant 1 observed that, with regard to service-learning opportunities, the expectations of not-for-profit organizations compared to for-profit entities differed, and that that difference translated into the types of activities she performed for each, although there were similarities with the how the management of each functioned. Experiencing both sides, she said, helped her to choose an occupation that would help her give back as an aspect of her employment. Participant 6, too, acknowledged that service learning helped to choose future careers or interests, describing her experience in starting while in university a club she called “Pencil”, a chapter of a national charity called “Pencils of Promise”. Participant 6 worked with her university, government officials, and community members to open the club. Overall, Participant 6 said, “service learning influence me more than I had previously thought.”

This theme focused on the educational role of service-learning activities. The unique combination of knowledge acquired in the classroom and community experiences and awareness had a definite influence on career choices and opportunities. These evolved from graduates’ increased understanding of their role in the community, and the

community's recognition of the expertise of these students. Such mutuality in perceptions endowed the graduates with a unique quality of cultural awareness and sensitivity to needs in organizations and the society as a whole. In turn, the graduates derived an acute sense of personal value from the contribution that they could make, as an extension of the mutually transformative exchanges that naturally occur between individuals and organizations as an outcome of service-learning initiatives.

This collaboration was found to give graduates in the study an edge over other individuals who did not have the level of preparation that service learning fostered. Undoubtedly, service-learning projects gave the graduates a glimpse of their future careers. Indeed, without service-learning opportunities, some graduates may have been deprived of the experiences that are necessary for preparation for suitable future jobs.

Summary

In the analysis of the four major themes emerging from the data—partnerships with the community, developing social and leadership skills, career opportunities and networking, and service learning influence over career choice, it was clear that participants experienced inclusion, fulfillment, opportunity, and networking capabilities. In reflecting, they were overall aware of the positive impact of service learning on their educational and career pursuits. As an important outcome, the students have built lasting relationships with members in the community where they have received internships and full-time employment in various sectors. By and large, the participants appeared compliant with the school's direction, aligning with the syllabus of their courses and maximizing the hours and time spent on each. Chapter 5 presents my interpretation of the

findings and acknowledges the limitations of the study, discusses the possible implications for social change, and recommends areas for future research.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceived effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment postgraduation for students in the Cayman Islands. The target population were graduates from a prominent high school where service learning is included in the curriculum. The main themes extracted from the data were partnerships with the community, developing social and leadership skills, career opportunities and networking, and service-based projects. The case study approach was adopted to facilitate securing a firm understanding of the graduates' experiences. In the study, I employed a qualitative research approach as other methods did not fit the problem. Qualitative research lent itself particularly well to observing participants and uncovering the events to be measured (Levitt et al., 2017).

Exploring and understanding the experiences of these graduates in the Cayman Islands is necessary for the process of gathering information that will be applied to implementing service learning in other high schools in the Cayman Islands. In this chapter, the findings from this study are analyzed in conjunction with the results from prior studies in service learning. This study findings are also examined and interpreted in the context of ELT. Lastly, this chapter explores and outlines the limitations of the study, the implications for positive social change, the recommendations for future research, and the conclusion of the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

In this chapter, I present the interpretation of the findings based on participants' responses during interviews, my field notes, and a review of other research findings. The

findings from this study confirmed that service learning impacts high school graduates positively in securing employment postgraduation in the Cayman Islands. The main subthemes that emerged from the graduates' descriptions of their experiences with service learning were (a) creation of partnership, (b) skills development, (c) employment and networking, and (d) influence on lifelong goals. Themes emerged from the interview process, the questions for which were linked directly to the research question. The findings from the study highlight the importance of service learning in high school and the significant role of service learning in participants securing employment opportunities in the Cayman Islands. This study also identified various support systems in the community that influence students' engagement in service-based projects.

The seven participants agreed that service learning through participation in projects in partnership with local communities results in the development of important personal skills and the creation of opportunities for networking and career advancement. All participants declared that service learning continued to exert positive impacts on their lives after high school. This finding is consistent with research that demonstrates that service learning is an influential educational strategy for student achievement of academic goals (McNatt, 2019). The service element in learning enhances and supports the development of students' intellectual abilities, skill acquisition, and career training (Aldridge et al., 2015). Although two of the participants thought that their high school experiences did not fully demonstrate the efficacy of service learning and that the school's initiatives need improvement, upon entering college—with its much more

expansive breadth and scope of service learning—they became convinced of the component's integral value in preparing them.

This was a common thread that connected the interviews, demonstrating that service-learning projects indeed had positive impacts on both students and community partners. One key area of learning for participants was in communication skills, which takes on increasing importance in higher-end jobs (Schleel & Karns, 2017). As evidence of the pivotal role of communication in service learning, research findings list communication skills among the leading attributes that students achieve in service-learning courses (Ayub et al., 2015). In other significant gains, all participants acknowledged the importance of service learning in the acquisition of their full-time jobs or internship placements after graduation. Another important benefit of service learning evident throughout participants' interviews was that of building advantageous networks with potential employers. Four of the participants disclosed that service learning served as the catalyst for many well-established community partnerships.

The recognized phenomenon of strong community partnerships forged by students was not surprising, given the passion that students brought to developing their own nonprofit organizations; these findings align with research by Julie and Hacker (2016). Three of the participants were able to liaise with other nongovernmental organization foundations to raise funds during charitable walks, runs, or food bank events. Two of the participants agreed that connecting to local government representatives would also help to identify any societal issues. All participants believe that partnering with the community helped them to develop business ideas that in turn

helped to create relationships with communities. The value of this interconnectedness and interplay of project and community is well supported by Driscoll et al. (2017).

A particularly encouraging feature of this collaboration and interconnectedness is the unique opportunity that service learning affords schools and universities to access and inspire the dynamic force of peers of the same age group. In this study, all the participants reported a sense of engagement and excitement when working with their peers on community projects. The results shed light on how students are able to create a unique partnership with their peers by building a circle of trust among themselves, which can be difficult to achieve in less homogenous groups. Participants shared, too, a sense of empathy and fulfillment—all too often not felt in other relationships of this age group—through the opportunity to meet and connect with different people in various organizations. In fact, the participants referenced long-term relationships struck through service-learning activities with corporate partners. The combined stirring of passions, the sensing of empathy, and the deep sense of fulfillment they derived from service learning culminated in creating not only lifelong dedication to community affairs but also set them on track to fulfilling career choices. Interestingly, many of these career choices are themselves opportunities for service to their communities.

One of the factors contributing to graduates' employment opportunities after high school is strong social and leadership skills. Recognizing that service learning strengthens leadership skills, Gallagher and McGorry (2015) argued that students must be given opportunities for learning and developing both leadership and communication skills in service-learning activities. The experience of study participants seemed to provide

evidence of the contribution of these factors to workplace success, given the overwhelmingly positive responses from study participants that service learning played a critical role in them securing and retaining employment. The transfer of this learning to the workplace, study participants said, enabled them to display professionalism while focusing on the details of their careers. Hébert and Hauf (2015) discussed the enhancement of interpersonal skills by means of service-learning programs and how these practical skills assist in effectively solving real issues at the workplace.

Accordingly, study participants reported specifically building interpersonal skills as they engaged in various community projects. During their high school tenure, they reported, they were able to participate in clubs that boosted their self-confidence. Stolz et al. (2012) posited that service learning allowed participants to socialize and build their strengths while working on their weaknesses. Pless and Borecká (2014) argued that experiential learning generates various designs that are key to developing leadership, teamwork, and social integration skills. These are just a few of the necessary interaction skills for solving of complex issues (Helgeson & Schneider, 2015).

Developing these varied skills gives participants confidence to engage in meaningful communication with the community. Indeed, researchers have posited that to transfer profound learning experiences into the workplace individuals must learn to become responsible leaders through service learning (Driscoll et al., 2017). And the combined resource of service and experiential learning creates a helpful balance in knowledge (Miftachul et al., 2018). These research findings were well supported by the

reports of the study participants, who confirmed showed that the many benefits of service learning to all parties involved.

Interpretation of Findings in the Context of the Theory of Experiential Learning

Participants in this study shared how their hands-on experiences while participating in service learning impacted their lives as new entrants to the working field, equipping them to be work ready. In addition, as the participants spoke about service learning in the interview, you could discern how well prepared they are for jobs globally. They disclosed that the principles of service learning were adopted as the standards for courses that taught at the school. This adaptation correlates with the impacts of experiential learning, a phenomenon well documented by Kolb (2014).

According to Kolb (2014), the core components of experiential learning are concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. The participants' interviews, indicating an open mindset and immersion in projects, confirmed attitudes and behaviors reminiscent of the four modes. Similarly, they reflected on the experiences from multiples perspectives of the project. The participants also related their observations in the context of course subjects' and service-learning concepts and theories, and, lastly, they related that they applied learning from each project to solve issues and make decisions. Reck (2015) confirmed that students may enter any phase of the cycle at any time during the project, but that they must ultimately experience all four modes of the cycle. These findings of the study and supporting research are documented in the ELT of John Dewey. Hence, the aforementioned research findings and subject matter are aligned with the literature review

presented in Chapter 2. The findings relate to high school graduates' perspectives on the effectiveness on the role of service learning on post graduation employment.

Limitations of the Study

Some limitations to this study were identified. First, the potential dilemma for the participants in providing honest feedback is acknowledged, considering that the school is a prominent one and given the understandable instinct to protect the school's reputation, resulting in possible personal bias. Another limitation could be inherent in the demographics of the population served by the school. Unfortunately, I did not have another participating school, which it was not possible to replicate student experiences in a comparative area in terms of population demographics. The particular age group selected for the study is also a potential limitation, given that most of these graduates were either college-bound or already in attendance. Clearly, a broadened scope to attract a more divergent group of participants has implications for the validity of the findings.

As a result of the homogeneity of participants, I reached saturation by my fifth interviewee, although this does not in itself imply invalidity, as Fusch and Ness (2015) posited that as few as six interviewees can reach saturation without necessarily having a deleterious impact on the study. Nevertheless, this study extended to seven interviewees in order to mitigate any fallacious generalizations due to the small group of participants in this case study (Boddy, 2016). Lastly, two family members participated, posing the danger of homogeneity in responses to the interview questions. For this reason, study criteria should exclude family members of participants.

Recommendations

Alexander and Khabanyane (2013) underscored service learning as a selfless, reflective, and developmental, as regards both student and community. The authors insisted that the application of such learning stimulates knowledge and skills in sustaining participants service-learning activities. Schools administrators have studied their community's traits in depth and realize that the world is changing (Alexander & Khabanyane, 2013). They, too, must prepare their students for the many businesses that they may pursue to receive their students and with which they may wish to build mutual trust. Chang et al. (2014) asserted that engaging with businesses builds mutual trust and creates shared goodwill when difficulties are encountered.

Two students in this study reported an initial hesitancy about accommodating this type of learning, but said that once they enrolled, they developed a different mindset. Such positive responses on initiation is also evidenced generally among students in academic institutions. This is consistent with the research of Julie and Hacker (2016) whose findings show that service learning has increased in higher education in the range of disciplines.

This study and other research therefore suggest that further investigations into the methodology of implementing service learning in high schools are warranted, particularly regarding interventions such as linking service learning to the classroom. In addition, findings from current research may be applied to supporting, developing and implementing service-learning curricula and promoting it to high school educators. Recommendations for further research stems directly also from the limitations of this

study. These include expanding the small qualitative sample size and extending the age of participants to graduates over age 25, because many potential participants in that age range would have experienced service learning in tertiary educational institutions.

It would also be interesting to explore community partners' perspectives on the students who participate in service-learning projects before graduating from high school. This is consistent with the findings of Hébert and Hauf (2015), who called for more rigorous research to determine the true effect of service learning. Hébert and Hauf (2015) observed that while educational institutions are more widely implementing service-learning activities, student supervisors are not gathering feedback from community partners. Julie and Hacker (2016) reported that using other aspects of a review process for service-learning programs would contribute to schools' mission and academic strategic plans.

Equally, Moss (2009) indicated that service learning helps the students beyond the theory of their textbook and opens the various barriers to first-hand experiences that plague the classroom. Service learning therefore capacitates the powerless while also creating bridges over the walls that prevent the school from interacting with the members in the community. Moss (2009) therefore aptly challenged education policies that are not in support of experiential educational models. While study participants reported positively on service learning in Cayman high schools, it was clear that the schools must accommodate a more apprehensive academic commitment to service learning in K-12. In particular, schools need to understand the complexity of the dynamics of class and student interaction with service learning in the Islands.

Implications of Social Change

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the social implications of this research extend to the accountability of students for their goals of making a difference in their societies and for their preparedness for undertaking their avowed roles. When such implications are conscientiously recognized and regarded, new knowledge can be synergistically created from the combined wisdom of the persons in the environment of relevant studies, with the ultimate goal, in turn, of making a positive difference in the society.

That positive difference is reinforced and extended through the interplay of research into the contribution of service learning to various sectors of society. Indeed, Wood et al. (2015) argued that service learning offers the education sector a platform for disseminating research that promotes social change necessary for improving the quality of life for all. Meanwhile, this improvement in quality of life directly impacts students who participate in service learning, as it is an area that in itself demands ethical behaviors. When one considers that service learning is a resource that further extends to students' making of wise career choices, the compounding effect can only result in the ultimate good of society.

This compounding effect is further enhanced by the diversity afforded by service learning. Wood et al. (2015) argued that service learning's natural capacity for engagement of a diverse range of individuals in varied employment avenues empowers stakeholders in an assortment of fields. In thus enabling and facilitating students, regardless of their ethnicity, to access opportunities to work in diverse settings in the community and in employment fields, the outcomes for society and social change are

immeasurable. To enlarge the opportunities for such social benefits, participants in this study suggested that it would be useful for interested persons to start early, as that would create positive outcomes from the early years, thereby enhancing and expanding service to the community.

Beyond these obvious benefits from encouraging early and wide participation from an early age, Calderon (2003) posited that academic community partnerships promoted critical thinking about social problems in the community that may be otherwise difficult to achieve first-hand for the average student. This level of experience in itself holds implications for long-term social change. The participants stressed, however, that teachers were essential to positive outcomes—they need to provide the necessary support to assure the success of service-learning programs.

Among positive outcomes of these programs, the rich and varied social milieu in service learning equips graduates with general business knowledge and interpersonal competencies otherwise hard to achieve (Preiser-Houy & Navarrete, 2006). In addition, while building these skills as they engage in the community and workplaces, graduates of service learning are equipped to better understand the importance of social advocacy. In this context, Butin (2007) argued that service learning changes students' mindset, inspires them to question social inequalities, and motivates them to stand for justice.

So, overall, in the social arena, the service-learning experience transforms students by equipping them to effectively aspire to and cultivate social responsibility, strengthen interpersonal skills, and support stronger networks with community members (Hardin-Ramanan et al., 2018), all contributing to positive societal social change. Social

benefits also accrue to lecturers supervising students engaged in social learning activities. In this regard, this researcher holds the view that this study can be helpful in understanding how to connect students to lecturers and to the outcomes of service-learning courses in schools, which, in turn, will influence student learning and create a positive school and community partnership, again contributing to societal change and development.

Studying these connections may produce an additional area of educational institutional support for the infrastructure for service learning, which is a beneficial outcome for all constituencies in the Cayman Islands. Erickson (2011) argued that researchers are agents of change that locate topics of interest that will inspire rational thinkers. The potential is first to inform individuals of the need for service learning in the classroom. Besides, it assists and enforces the capability to challenge individuals to participate in projects in the real world. Service learning presents the ability to incorporate theory into a classroom regardless of one's major. Moreover, participation in these services helps them to revisit the existing views of discrimination, racial, and stereotypes in the communities and confront these which are not evidenced-based.

This study provided an opportunity for graduates to share experiences of service learning in high school. Further, based on the graduates' positive outcomes, it reinforces the need for schools to implement service learning from an early level in schools. This study confirms the need for available resources and awareness of programs within the educational sector. The projects will allow students to interact with members in the community, which can change their mindset on employability skills to function

effectively in the workplace. Another area that aids students' social development and awareness is the opportunity that service learning affords for managing projects in real-life work experiences. Cantatore (2018) suggested that given the opportunity for civic engagement (which merges with experiential learning), students will enhance their employability skills, course work, community service, and improve on several soft skills.

Conclusion

This study contributed to service-learning programs in Cayman high schools by highlighting the many benefits that students may derive in participating in such projects. The qualitative case study answered the research question, and the emerging themes clearly aligned with ELT. Participating graduates did indeed discover the true meaning of service learning and experienced positive and growth-inspiring relationships with community partners. The study also highlighted the unmet needs of the community. Indeed, service learning, drawing on the combined capability of community volunteers, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, and community corporations.

Service learning provides a powerful resource to enable students to learn and grow as they pursue the achievement of their individual passions, whether in employment or in service to others, and better still, if combined. Allowed to blossom and to flower, students will connect and even strengthen the broken relationships that existed between schools and communities. In terms of what is unique about this study, service learning has been studied by numerous scholars from various perspectives, but the adaptation of service learning to graduates from high school seeking to secure employment has received little or no attention. This study has sought to fill this research gap. From that

perspective, this is one of the most important outcomes of this study evidence that service-learning experiences do not only enhance students' interpersonal and leadership skills, but also contribute significantly to employability.

The achievements of these large, universal goals spring from the small beginnings, as students recognize their strengths and value, while making their debut, whether as eager or tentative volunteers, entering the brave new world of government, business, or service enterprises. But whatever path they take, students must be anchored in service-learning programs that are shaped by the morals and beliefs of a school's mission. Taking it a step higher, these fundamental principles must be led by the government ministry or the overarching private organizations that have established the schools. Service learning is all about values, not just about achieving a job, although that is a part of it. As Carlos Ruiz Zafon said in his worldwide best-selling novel, *The Shadow of the Wind*, "Making money isn't hard in itself. What's hard is to earn it doing something worth devoting one's life to."

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment post-graduation in the Cayman Islands. Service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience. This questionnaire is a research instrument and the data gathered will be used only for such purposes. The participants will not be identified in this interview and are not allowed to put their names on this interview. Thank you for your participation.

Research Question

RQ: How do graduates perceive the effectiveness and role of service learning in securing employment post-graduation in the Cayman Islands?

1. Let's begin the interview by "telling me what you know about Service Learning".
2. What are your experiences (positive or negative) of service learning while attending high school?
3. Do you have any objectives or guidelines in implementing service learning in high schools' curriculum? Please explain.
4. Tell me about the relationship between employment and service learning?
5. How do you identify an appropriate serviced-based community project?
6. In what ways has service learning influence your choice of employment?
7. How do you ensure that the community projects are linked to curricular objectives?

8. What methods do you use to get engaged in community projects and prepare you for the working environment? Please provide an example.
9. What activities and resources do you think will assist students in assessing community needs?
10. What are some of the learning goals established to achieve in the service learning projects?
11. What are some of the basic guidelines that are used to measure service learning and employment?
12. Please provide any additional comments that you think could be useful to this study.