



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**SERVICE-LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND OUTCOMES IN
DEVELOPING EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS AMONG TVET STUDENTS IN A
PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA**

MOHD FAKHRUL AZIZIE BIN MOHD ZAID

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By

MOHD FAKHRUL AZIZIE BIN MOHD ZAID

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia,
in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science**

June 2020

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

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Chairman : Muhd Khaizer bin Omar, PhD
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The need to develop future graduates that encompass employability skills has become one of the agendas in the Malaysian Educational Blueprint for Higher Education 2015-2025. Hence, to rectify the aim, service-learning (SL) is introduced as among the strategies in promoting students with hands-on experience linked to the community engagement. Notably, the application of SL is limited despite evidences of volunteerism found in many scholarly works. SL transmits academic knowledge through volunteering works and is highly regarded as a foundation in developing students' employability skills. Therefore, this study was conducted to explore the SL experiences and the outcomes in developing employability skills among TVET students in a Malaysian public university. Specifically, two research questions were formulated (i) what the students learned from their SL experience? and (ii) how SL project strengthen student employability skills? This study employed a qualitative case study approach to answer the research questions. The subjects of the study were purposely selected among second and third-year students in Bachelor of Education. The subjects of the study were chosen based on the criterion-based selection to ensure the rich information given by the informants. A total of four focus group discussions were conducted using semi-structured interview questions. This study utilised the Nvivo 12.0, a computerised software tool to organise and facilitate the data especially in the process of thematic analysis. The themes emerged based on students' involvement in SL project were managing conflicts, knowledge-sharing and self-values. Meanwhile, four themes emerged concerning students' employability skills development that are leadership skills, communication skills, critical thinking skills and teamwork skills. Based on the findings, SL able to be one of the subjective teaching practices for providing meaningful learning experience to students surrounded with community, which subsequently nurtured students' employability skills including their career readiness for future job market.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Master Sains

**PENGALAMAN PEMBELAJARAN BERASASKAN PERKHIDMATAN DAN
HASIL PEMBELAJARAN DALAM MEMBANGUNKAN KEMAHIRAN
KEBOLEHPASARAN DI KALANGAN PELAJAR TVET DI UNIVERSITI
AWAM MALAYSIA**

Oleh

MOHD FAKHRUL AZIZIE BIN MOHD ZAID

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Keperluan membangunkan graduan masa depan yang merangkumi kemahiran kebolehpasaran kini menjadi salah satu agenda dalam Pelan Pendidikan Tinggi Malaysia untuk Pendidikan Tinggi (2015-2025). Oleh itu, bagi mencapai matlamat ini, pembelajaran-perkhidmatan (SL) diperkenalkan sebagai salah satu strategi dalam mendedahkan pelajar dengan pengalaman secara langsung yang berkaitan dengan penglibatan masyarakat. Aplikasi SL masih terhad walaupun terdapat pelbagai bukti khidmat sukarela disebut di dalam karya ilmiah. SL menyalurkan pengetahuan akademik melalui kerja-kerja sukarela dan dianggap sebagai asas dalam membangunkan kemahiran kebolehpasaran pelajar. Oleh itu, kajian ini dijalankan bagi meneroka pengalaman SL dan kesannya ke atas perkembangan kemahiran kebolehpasaran dalam kalangan pelajar universiti awam Malaysia. Khususnya, dua persoalan kajian dibentuk (a) apakah yang pelajar pelajari daripada pengalaman SL mereka? dan (b) bagaimanakah projek SL dapat menguatkan kemahiran kebolehpasaran pelajar? Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kajian kes kualitatif untuk menjawab soalan-soalan di atas. Subjek kajian ini dipilih dari kalangan pelajar tahun dua dan tiga Bachelor Pendidikan. Subjek kajian dipilih berdasarkan kriteria bagi memastikan maklumat yang banyak oleh para pemberi maklumat. Sebanyak empat perbincangan kumpulan fokus dijalankan menggunakan soalan temubual separa berstruktur. Kajian ini menggunakan Nvivo 12.0 sebagai alat perisian berkomputer untuk menganjurkan dan memudahkan analisis terutamanya dalam proses analisis tema. Tema-tema yang muncul berdasarkan penglibatan pelajar dalam projek SL adalah menguruskan konflik, perkongsian pengetahuan dan nilai-nilai diri. Sementara itu, empat tema muncul untuk perkembangan kemahiran kebolehpasaran pelajar; kemahiran kepimpinan, kemahiran komunikasi, kemahiran berfikir kritis dan kemahiran kerja berpasukan. Berdasarkan penemuan-penemuan ini, SL dilihat berkemampuan menjadi salah satu amalan pengajaran yang subjektif dalam

memberikan pengalaman pembelajaran yang bermakna kepada pelajar yang dikelilingi oleh komuniti, dan seterusnya memupuk kemahiran kebolehgajian pelajar terutamanya kesediaan kerjaya untuk pasaran kerja masa depan.



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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of the Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

HLI	Higher Learning Institution
IR 4.0	Industrial Revolution 4.0
MEB	Malaysia Education Blueprint
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education
SL	Service-learning
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The evolution of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0) is being widely discussed all over the world. Technically, IR 4.0 brings changes to the use of mechanical production equipment towards the cyber-physical system. According to Schwab (2017), the changes in the IR 4.0 are driven by three main domains namely physical, digital and biological domains that are interrelated and benefited from one another based on discoveries. In this regard, IR 4.0 has brought another paradigm shift that will potentially impact the economy, business, society and education. Assuredly, education plays a major role in developing human capital in terms of physical, emotion, spirit and intellect. In addition, education also provides the opportunity to expand students' knowledge and skill based on their interest. However, the emergence of IR 4.0 has pushed the education field to move along to ensure that the system is still relevant to the current changes. Therefore, this transformation has led to the existence of Education 4.0 in keeping the pace with the needs of IR 4.0 where the integration of human and technology are required to discover new possibilities and vision of learning (Hussin, 2018).

In light with the current changes in IR 4.0, Malaysian government through Ministry of Education (MoE) has come out with a strategic plan to strengthen and sustain the education system, which is known as Malaysia Education Blueprint (MEB) 2015-2025 for higher education (MoE, 2015). The blueprint describes comprehensive effort from the government in ensuring that all Malaysian citizens have equal access to quality education that forms well-balanced students in every aspect. Additionally, MEB for higher education proposed 10 shifts that will spur continued excellence in the higher education system. One of the shifts namely 'Holistic, Entrepreneurial, and Balanced Graduates' outlines the initiatives on increasing the use of experiential and service-learning (SL) approach, enhancing student learning experience by expanding industrial collaboration and leveraging technology-enabled models to fit more personalised learning (MoE, 2015). These directions in the MEB should be followed by the higher learning institutions (HLI) to ensure the success of the entire plan and to prepare their graduates to meet the demand in current changes of IR 4.0.

Meanwhile, the central phenomenon of the students' experience is described by the process of learning happens when knowledge is developing through the transformation of experience (Kolb, 1984). The strategies of students' experience in different learning environments are essential to improve their capabilities to fit in any circumstances especially when they enter the real working world. According to Dewey (1938), learning is a continuous process grounded in experience where every experience gained before can be modified in some ways and implemented into other situations that comes after. For instance, students' experience in their internship can be used when they started working after they graduated. On the other hand, there are

many ways to enhance the student learning experience including the application of the SL approaches.

Generally, SL has been widely acknowledged in worldwide educational settings especially in developed countries like the United States, Europe and Australia (Murphy & Tan, 2012). In addition, SL is one of the high impact educational practices within higher education in the United States (Brownell & Swaner, 2010; Kuh, 2008). Meanwhile, Fink (2016) proposed SL as one of the five high impact teaching practices to increase student engagement and improve student learning. Based on aforementioned scholars, the application of SL in teaching and learning can be assumed effective as it has given a lot of positive impacts on the community involved.

The continuous effort from MoE to increase the usage of SL in teachings and learning in the higher education should be supported by educational stakeholders especially the administration, faculty, academician, students or even community. It is undeniable that HLIs are able to create highly competitive graduates in the intellectual field; however, the responsibility to contribute to the local community should also be considered since the HLIs act as a centre in the spreading of information. Therefore, the opportunity presented in the SL approach provides two main aspects of service and learning that are interrelated with each other and would allow us to have graduates that could answer the call for the IR 4.0 era in addition to giving back to the community.

1.2 Background of the study

Generally, the unemployment is not a recent issue that has been debated across the country. In the worldwide scenario in terms of employment, the International Labour Organisation (2018) reported that the total number of unemployed gather the number of 192 million. This figure incorporates all the people who are unemployed including graduates and non-graduates. In detailed, unemployment is an important indicator of a country's economy growth. A high unemployment rate generally indicates an economy in the recession period, which resulted in low job opportunities, while low unemployment rate suggests a well governed economy. However, the current changes in technologies with the evolving of IR 4.0 indirectly affected the job opportunities at selected sectors, which are making unemployment issue remained a major concern (Singh, Sarkar & Bahl, 2018).

As one of developing countries, Malaysia has been criticised towards unemployment issue especially among graduates. According to Department of Statistics Malaysia (2019), the unemployment rate remained unchanged at 3.3% from May to June 2019, which gather a total number of 521.4 thousand people. This figure is a major concern as it is higher compared to that of other Asia countries where Malaysia was ranked the 18th, which have the same rate with Turkmenistan (Trading Economics, 2019). Meanwhile, unemployment rate significantly indicates the level of country's efficiency in using human workforce and index of economic activities.

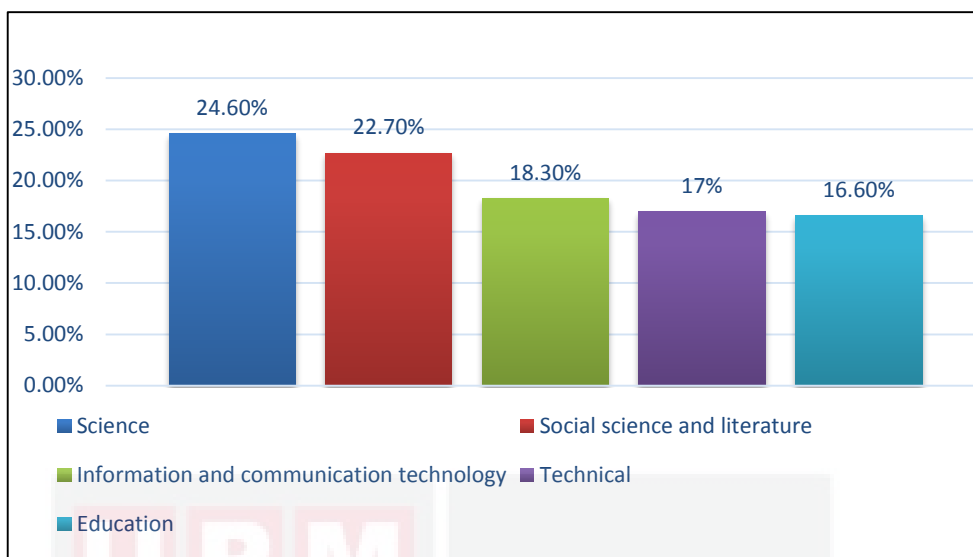


Figure 1.1 : Unemployed Graduates' Rate by Major Field of Studies in 2017
(Source: Higher Education Statistics 2017)

Particularly, unemployment rate is also affected by graduates who do not have a job but interested to work. Based on the higher education statistics by MoE, a total number of 53,373 graduates were unemployed in 2017. According to Figure 1.1, science graduates had the highest unemployment rate by 24.60%, while graduates from education field indicates the lowest rate at 16.60%. A total of 22.70% graduates from social science and literature were unemployed as well as information and communication technology field that recorded the rate of 18.30%. Meanwhile, unemployed graduates from technical field indicated the rate of 17%. This statistic clearly shows that the unemployment graduates' rate is in crucial stage, which gather yearly average at 19%.

The scenario regarding unemployed graduates contributed a negative impact on national economy, social, politic as well as education field. Furthermore, the government did not get a proper return after making a significant investment in the education system as a result of unemployed graduates. Consequently, this scenario will continue to affect and increase the social problem in the entire country. The unemployed graduates issue has to be seriously considered since HLIs produce their graduates every year without realising upon negative circumstances. The growing number of graduates annually has resulted in an oversupply of local workforce compared to job opportunities.

Undeniably, good and outstanding academic result after completing studies is a big advantage for graduates to be hired in a company. However, this advantage is not only the criterion required by the company. According to Mohd Kamaruzaman, Hamid, Mutalib and Rasul (2019), graduates need to equip themselves with sufficient employability skills as job competition does not solely rely on technical knowledge gained during their studies. The term employability skills is differently known across

the world as it also refers to general skills, non-technical skills, essential skills, core skills, life skills, transferable skills, fundamental skill, necessary skills, enabling skills and soft skills.

Table 1.1 : The Importance of Mastering in Skills from Industry Perspective

No.	Skills	Percentage %
1	Communication skills (written)	82 %
2	Problem solving skills	80.9%
3	Ability to work in a team	78.7%
4	Initiative	74.2%
5	Analytical/quantitative skills	71.9 %
6	Strong work ethic	70.8 %
7	Communication skills (verbal)	67.4 %
8	Leadership	67.4 %
9	Detail-oriented	59.6 %
10	Technical skills	59.6 %
11	Flexibility/adaptability	58.4 %
12	Computer skills	55.1 %
13	Interpersonal skills (relates well with others)	52.8 %
14	Organisational ability	43.8 %
15	Strategic planning skills	38.2 %
16	Tactfulness	25.8 %
17	Creativity	23.6 %
18	Friendly/outgoing personality	22.5 %
19	Entrepreneurial skills/risk-taker	16.9 %
20	Fluency in a foreign language	11.2 %

(Source: NACE Job Outlook 2019)

In detailed, employability skills or the terms related basically cover the same aspect, which is all the skills needed to be equipped by graduates other than technical skills. Recently, a report from National Association of College and Employers (NACE) in 2019 stated that most of the industries screen their candidates or graduates with the minimum GPA number at 3.00. Surprisingly, it was not the only criterion they are looking for. According to Table 1.1, industry also seeks for other skills under employability skills, while technical skills are on the 10th most importance skills to be mastered by graduates. This statistic clearly shows that employability skills are essential and necessarily required by the industries rather than technical skills.

Primarily, graduates' unemployment significantly affects the human workforce and is caused by several factors. According to Ismail, Yussof and Sieng (2011), the lack of quality among Malaysian graduates is considered to be resulted from the rising of unemployment problem. This is because graduates are weak in the aspect of employability skills despite that they are in good in hard skills. In addition, demand changes in the workforce due to global current changes in terms of one industry to another is also a factor contributed to this issue (Singh, Thambusamy, & Ramly,

2013). Besides, Hanapi and Nordin (2014) outlined insufficient competency among lecturers and quality of education in terms of curriculum that overlooked at the importance of connecting with the industry had brought this problem to be daunting. The declining of education quality is deemed to be a by-product of the mass amount of colleges and universities built without a proper vision on what they want to achieve.

Apart from that, a few steps have been taken by the MoE in Malaysia to overcome this substantial issue and provide high-quality education for the students. In 2006, Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) has launched Module for the Development of Soft Skills for HLIs, which outlined seven soft skills that should be possessed by all Malaysian graduates (Mohd Adnan, Daud, Alias & Razali, 2012). Then, National Higher Education Strategic Plan: Beyond 2020 was introduced in 2007 to meet the nation's human resource capital needs and transform higher education for making Malaysia an international hub of higher educational excellence (Ministry of Higher Education, 2007). However, the last two phases in the strategic plan were not implemented since no blueprints were introduced to approve their applications. These phases were then replaced by a new strategic plan known as MEB 2015-2025 for higher education due to the current changes in the era of globalisation and technologies (MoE, 2015). The steps taken by the MoE clearly indicate their commitment in ensuring that the HLIs are able to provide top class education system, maintain sustainable economic growth and strengthen human resource development especially in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector.

Particularly, TVET is one of the education programs at the forefront of workforce development, which is supposed to respond positively towards the accomplishment of the higher education missions. According to Rasul, Ashari, Azman and Abdul Rauf (2015), TVET field has been recognised by the government as the main source in providing highly-skilled workforce as well as a part of the key in driving Malaysia towards becoming a developed nation. The significance of empowering the TVET sector to enhance the national economic growth has been noticed by many countries around the world. For instance, France government provides the TVET programmes to develop individual and civic capabilities as well as related skills directly to employment (Winch, 2013). As a matter of fact, TVET has the potential in providing essential educational element that extends beyond the immediate demands in the world of work. Meanwhile, in South East Asia region EFA Global Monitoring Report (2012) explained that the TVET sector has been called upon to respond to the skilled worker needs of new emerging industries, which has led to the transformation of Institute of Technical Education (ITE) Singapore as a world-class educational institution.

Though the development of TVET is a national agenda, there are a few issues and challenges that could cripple this effort. To be highlighted, TVET education pathways are not seen as the first choice among students. Ismail and Abiddin (2014) mentioned that poor perception by the public especially from parents has caused this field to become unpopular compared to others. According to Winch (2013), TVET becomes an unattractive choice due to lack of demand from potential TVET students and their families, insufficient desire of employers, attitudes from the institutions and low action by the government.

Other than that, the methodology of the teachers and lecturers teaching TVET is now being questioned as it is heavily focused on the traditional method that is attuned towards teacher-centred learning. According to a study by Yusof, Roddin and Awang (2015) using a survey among 192 students in selected polytechnics, traditional approaches were seen as dominant approaches applied by the lecturers with 'chalk and talk' as the most preferable. Additionally, low academic achievements and lack of skills acquired by the TVET students are due to few factors like the inappropriate way of instructional approaches (Esa, Padil, Selamat & Idris, 2015), complicated educational objectives and biased assessment by the lecturers (Bello & Aliyu, 2012). Aligned with this issue in a university landscape, the findings resulted that most of the lecturers applied personal model as their teaching style where they taught the students by giving examples (Shaari, Yusof, Ghazali, Osman, & Dzahir, 2014). Educational practice like teacher-centred approach is based on the lecturers and teachers as the main source of the knowledge while students learn through lectures as well as direct instructions. Consequently, the graduates produced would be incompetent and lack of employability skills.

Thus, employing a wide array of methodologies in the course of teaching has become important today to equip graduates with the academic knowledge that goes hand in hand with employability skills to make sure that they could compete in the job market. In addition, most TVET students in selected polytechnics agreed that teaching and learning methods used by lecturers were valuable in encouraging students to apply employability skills before facing the world of work (Esa et al., 2015). Lecturers need to be more open-minded in diversifying the methods of teaching and learning (Shaari et al., 2014), particularly when applying employability skills in TVET courses (Curtis, 2004). Meanwhile, the process of teaching and learning should not only be classroom-based as the students are excited to carry out activities in new environments. Furthermore, students are expected to involve in more active learning activities to maximise their involvement (Yusof et al., 2015).

In other words, the policy outlined by the ministry cannot be realised if the stakeholders like teachers and lecturers did not play their role according to the designed blueprint. Hui and Cheung (2015) suggested that HLIs especially TVET institutes may consider the alternative, which is non-traditional strategies, for creating a new paradigm in learning environments to enhance students in actively experimenting and reflecting on their own attitudes. Without adequate educational practice among the lecturers, it is not surprising that graduates will suffer in the working environments. Besides, too much guidance and excessive direction in the learning process may limit the students' capabilities to explore their personal qualities with regard to necessary skills while completing tasks. Although the students may have good achievements in their academics, this does not mean that they can survive in their careers. As a result, students will struggle in understanding the new working environment surrounding them especially concerning their skills (Chiu, Mahat, Rashid, Razak & Omar, 2016).

Accordingly, emphasis on how the delivery process in teaching and learning is essential with regard to produce graduates that meet industrial criteria for employment. Furthermore, instructional approaches grounded with experience among the students are suitable to ensure that appropriate knowledge and sufficient employability skills are effectively developed. In fact, learning is the process played by the role of experience (Kolb, 1984). Students could use the experience they gained in their process of learning to be applied in the real world. In addition, learning process that takes place out of the classroom focusing on projects with the local community can give the chance for students to explore meaningful experience as they complete the task at hand. Indirectly, this creates more knowledgeable students with a well-equipped sense of etiquette and moral values.

In regards to the issue concerning appropriate teaching method grounded with students' experience, SL has provided a unique platform that offers the students the opportunity not only to learn through serving, but also how to serve. As a form of experiential learning, SL offers students with various colours of experience by collaboration with the community and also stays in demand regardless of the changing industries. By participating in SL activities, students have the abilities to relate with real life situation and navigating the complexity of the workplace (Huff, Zoltowski, & Oakes, 2016). Therefore, this study was conducted to explore students' experiences as they go through the learning process by applying SL. Furthermore, it is an essential element to discover the potential of SL that provide multiplicity of students' experiences as well as developing their employability skills along with the government's desire to produce quality and balanced TVET graduates.

1.3 Problem Statement

TVET graduates have been questioned to have low-quality skills (Ismail et al., 2011) and not well equipped with technical as well as employability skills (Ismail & Abiddin, 2014). Furthermore, employers are not satisfied with TVET graduates in terms of their skills acquired. These mismatch skills are caused by the skill gap requirement occurred between HLIs and employers (Mohd Kamaruzaman et al., 2019; Patacsil, Fernandez & Cenas, 2017; Jainuddin, Francis, Tawie & Matarul, 2015; Ramadi, Ramadi & Nasr, 2015; Radermacher, Walia & Knudson, 2014; Chithra, 2013). Consequently, this brings negative impact on the national unemployment rate and wastage of human capital resources.

Particularly, issues related to teaching strategy and employability skills have been often discussed by the researchers in HLIs (Esa et al., 2015). Currently, most of educators still rely on traditional approaches compared to other teaching strategies (Yusof et al., 2015; Hui & Cheung, 2015; Shaari et al., 2014). In general, typical traditional approaches are not relevant in enhancing skill development because students currently learn by active participation and more competitive in doing activities. Due to this scenario, students will face problems in a real-working world as they do not have the abilities to develop their potential qualities and self-confidence when dealing with the tasks.

Meanwhile, the studies on SL have been noticed globally as well as in the local setting. Additionally, the past studies on SL have been dominantly found in countries like the United States, Europe and Australia as they have certain bodies that take care of the implementation of SL. To date, this scenario is different in Malaysia since only limited literatures have been found especially to enhance employability skills. For instance, a study by Latib, Amin, Saud and Kamin (2017) was conducted to explore the impact of SL on the society from the perspectives of instructors and community. Guptan (2015) only focused on investigating how SL impacts the reflective learning abilities of the business students. Although there was a recent study by Hudin, Osman, Shokory and Wahid (2018) that explored the pros and cons of SL from TVET students' perspectives, the study did not involved any enhancements of employability skills.

Generally, SL offers service experiences among the students to meet the needs of a community and learn through their reflections. However, contradictory evidence in students' experiences resulted in whether or not this teaching strategy is able to enhance students' knowledge and employability skills. Questions have also arise by the researcher as a result of these issues concerning what exactly the experience gained by students from this SL project and how SL project strengthen student employability skills. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to understand and explore the SL and its impact on developing employability skills among TVET students in a Malaysian public university.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to achieve the purpose of the study, few research questions were outlined. These research questions are important to ensure the structure of the study. In general, there were two research questions posited as follow:

1. What the students learned from their SL experience?
2. How SL project strengthen student employability skills?

1.5 Significance of study

Principally, this study sought to explore the SL experience and the elements of employability skills acquired by the students through the project. After reviewing this study, the significance of study from various aspects was outlined. Firstly, this research can contribute to the body of knowledge, followed by a contribution to a few stakeholders like MoE, university, faculty, community, as well as students.

Overall, this study has the potential to open new learning environment in the research paradigm regarding SL with empirical evidence of students' experiences primarily in Malaysia settings. In terms of knowledge, this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge in education-related with teaching strategy using SL approach associated with elements of employability skills required by the students before

entering the world of work. As a result, the findings of this study can be used as a basis for expanding the pros and advantages of SL to be applied in the teaching and learning processes.

Apart from that, the findings of this study are practically significant to assist the MoE especially for HLIs to encourage more SL projects involving students and community partners. This study can be useful to help the government's effort to produce holistic and balanced graduates, which are parallel with the mission outlined in the MEB 2015-2025. Meanwhile, SL incorporates strong involvement from the faculty, educators, communities and students to ensure the effectiveness of the project. Through the collaboration, this study provides the platform for HLIs to improve their connection and relationship with the community partners.

In the meantime, the findings can be also useful as a guidance for educators to implement SL approach as it provides different learning environment with community engagement. From this study, educators can monitor their students expanding their personal qualities as well as developing employability skills. For the community, this study can indirectly provide a support to help and assist in solving specific issues.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of study

Generally, the scope of this study incorporates SL experience with respect to the employability skills acquired by the students through the project. This involved two main parts, which explored SL experience in terms of students' learning outcomes and elements of employability skills acquired by students through the project. Meanwhile, the limitations of this study were divided as follow:

1. Limitation on the informants: Informants of the study were limited to those in second and third-year students from Bachelor of Education (Home Science) in Faculty of Educational Studies, University Putra Malaysia. These students were also limited to those who were fully involved and had experiences in SL projects.
2. Limitation on the location: Since the SL incorporates students and communities, this study was only limited to a specific location of the SL project in Pengkalan Balak, Malacca. The community also only included the owner from Malacca Bumiputera Chalet, Resort and Homestay Owners Society. Further justifications on the chosen location were explained in Chapter 3.
3. Limitation on the area: This study limited the SL experience related to learning outcomes by the students involved in this project. In addition, this study only focused on elements of employability skills developed through SL experience by the students. Hence, educators and community's experiences toward the SL project were not included in this study.
4. Limitations on the methodology: The scope of this study was focused on exploring students' experiences in SL project, which preferred qualitative research design. Therefore, an in-depth study needs to be conducted to look

into the SL experience gained by the students. Since this study employed qualitative design and small numbers of informant, the findings were not suitable to be generalised.

1.7 Definition of terms

Service-learning – Service-learning (SL) is a form of experiential education in which students are engaged in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes (Jacoby, 1996). Meanwhile, Sigmon described (as cited in Eyler & Giles, 1999) that SL is applied to a project that includes a balance between service to the community, integrated with academic learning and reflection through experience. In this study, the term SL describes the designed project as teaching strategy where students stay connected and provide the service to address the needs of the community through linking the course contents with real-life situations and students' reflection based on their experience in such way to gain further understanding of the discipline.

Experience - Experience comprises sensory awareness (e.g., touch, smell, hearing, sight and taste), emotions (e.g., pleasure, excitement, anxiety, fear, hurt, empathy and attachment), physical conditions (e.g., temperature, strength and energy level) and cognition (e.g., constructing knowledge, establishing beliefs and solving problems) (Carver, 1996). This study employed the definition based on that by Manulang (1994), which stated that experience is an event that happened and been through by someone, which can be told and explained one by one.

Employability skills –The term employability skills has been sometimes referred to non-technical skills, generic skills, generic capabilities, transferrable skills, basic skills, essential skills, work skills, soft skills, core skills, core competencies, enabling skills and key skills (Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry & Business Council of Australia, 2007; Yorke, 2006; Fujimura, 2004; Knight and Yorke, 2002). It is highlighted that employability skills are important to help young graduates to get hired, gain professional development (Quality Assurance Agency, 2009) and to ensure they have the capability of being effective in the workplace (Confederation of British Industry, 2011). For this study, employability skills were described as the element of skills that gather all three fundamental bases of skills incorporated with to get a job, retaining a job and working effectively.

1.8 Summary

This chapter has presented the context and background of this study in relation to SL such as teaching strategy that provides platform for students to gain experience and exposure with the community. It has highlighted the issues regarding typical classroom approach in HLIs that eventually resulted in lack of appropriate skills acquired by the students. Besides, it has concisely stressed the importance on developing employability skills among students through teaching and learning

processes. Built from this understanding, two research questions have been formulated. Finally, the significance of the study has been addressed before documenting scope and limitations as well as definition of terms used in this study. The presentation and discussion of the related literature of this study are presented on the next chapter.



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LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

Journal

Omar, M. K., Mohd Zaid, M. F. A., Muhamad, M. M., Mat Rashid, A. M., & Mohd Puad, M. H. (2016). Service-learning experience and its application to enhance employability: A case study of Malaysian Public University. *Science International Lahore*. 28(5): 4501-4506.

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