

Community Service Engagement in Primary Schools: Pre-TESL Students' Experiences

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Abstract

Participation in community services amongst university students is essential to the students, the society, and to the university itself. Higher education has a role to expose students to experience learning in conducting community service projects that could nurture students' physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual developments. Hence, early exposure for Pre-TESL students to be involved in community services in the teaching environment by conducting English language events with primary school students could be beneficial for their future academic and professional endeavours. Fifty Pre-TESL students from Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Melaka campus worked collaboratively with the English Clubs in selected primary schools in Alor Gajah vicinity by conducting a one-day English language programme with primary four to six students. This study examined the positive impacts and challenges of carrying out community service programme. Data was collected through the open-ended question survey to get deeper insights into their learning journey. The pedagogical implications of the findings indicated that by conducting community services in the form of carrying out English language activities in primary schools exposed the tertiary students to learn about teamwork, management, leadership, and other specific skills essential for the development and professionalism of future ESL teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching is a service-oriented profession which requires professional attitude and a dynamic way of teaching. When preparing students to become teachers, they are required to gain foundation of theories and knowledge about the discipline of teaching which would be useful for their future career. Therefore, the involvement of students in community services in higher education settings has become more prevalent not only for personal and professional development, but also in developing social connection with the community of people around them. On top of that, educators in the universities should play their roles to provide real-life teaching and learning activities for teacher-to-be undergraduates to experience teaching. One such platform is to engage Pre-TESL students in community services whereby they voluntarily organise and conduct English language activities in nearby vicinity primary schools. By conducting these activities, it is hoped that as they complete the mission, they would utilise their critical thinking skill as they carry out their civic responsibilities towards their society and nation.

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Studies indicated that engaging in community service experiences are beneficial and they motivate higher learning students to interact and contribute to the surrounding community. Community services provide students with educational practices whereby students engage in an organised service activity with the aim of identifying community needs and reflecting on the service activities to gain further understanding on the course content, to appreciate the discipline, and to enhance their sense of civic responsibility (Carrington & Selva, 2010, cited in Soykan, Gunduz & Tezer, 2015, p. 2468). Through these services, participants are able to develop commonly shared values through service to others and to one's community (Andrew, 2001). This means that participants can get to know the surrounding communities better and offer their assistance to the nearby communities.

In pedagogies, community engagement is commonly known as "service learning". It is a combination of learning goals and community service which can strengthen both student growth and the common good (Bandy, 2017). This community project engaged students through participations in various types of community service experiences.

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

Empirical studies show that participation in community services among students in higher institution promotes personal, social, intellectual growth, civic responsibility, and career exploration (Carnicelli & Boluk, 2017; Hozdik, 2016; Molderez & Fonseca, 2017; Soykan, Gunduz & Tezer, 2015; Zi, Shi, Jen-Mai & Choon-Huat, 2016). Higher education institutions play important roles to meet community needs and stimulate social change by encouraging students to get involved in community service projects. Active collaboration in community service projects between students and stakeholders such as universities, private companies, schools, and other communities can contribute to the world's well-being (Andrew, 2001).

Pre-TESL is a one year preparatory programme that prepares students for entry into relevant degree programmes at local Public Institutions of Higher Learning (IPTA). The programme focuses on the TESL (Teaching English as Second Language) basic components and induces mastery of the four main language elements of Writing, Reading, Listening and Speaking, and Grammar as well as other interesting but significant and useful minor fields like Computer Literacy, Malaysian Studies, English Literature and Drama. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature by examining the impacts of community service projects on Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) students. Although extensive research has been carried out into the importance of community services among students, little is known about how community services affected the Pre-TESL students in UiTM Melaka campus, situated in Alor Gajah, Melaka. This study, therefore offers to analyse the positive impacts of community services to Pre-TESL students of UiTM Melaka campus and to identify the challenges that the students faced.

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Community Service Engagement

Community service has been described as a field-based experiential administration action conducted by learners as a contribution to the society and for which the learners' services are done voluntarily, and it is also known as volunteer activity, civic engagement or service learning (Hozdik, 2016, p. 14).

Based on a review of teacher candidates towards the practice of community service learning course, Soykan, Gunduz and Tezer (2015) proposed community service learning to be used as a pedagogical tool because it can develop teacher candidates to become active citizens and lifelong learners. This finding is in line with a recent study which shows that service learning can be a tool to be used to disrupt the traditional in-class learning approaches such as norm of individualism, teacher control and student passivity (Carnicelli & Boluk, 2017). On the other hand, some educators stressed that community service learning should not be compulsory to students, but it should be a life-long activity to build-up students' maturing characters and help them to build a sense of identity with other communities (Leung, Tsai & Wang, 2010).

2.2 Past Studies on Community Service Engagement among Students

In 2013, Anne Power examined the experiences of the pre-service teacher who participated in international service learning in Sekolah Menengah Bukit Jambul, Pulau Pinang, Malaysia. The participant enrolled in the Master of Teaching Secondary Course, the programme 'Professional Experience 3' (known as PE3) at the University of Western Sydney (UWS). The aim of the study was to assess the international experiences of the pre-service teacher in service learning. Based on the findings, the researcher discovered that service learning had given the school students, community members, and participating pre-service teacher chances to gain knowledge and enhance creativity (Power, 2013). According to Power (2013), the school students developed self-assurance, as they comprehend more about who they were, beyond studies and perceptions, and their function as educators.

Soykan, Gunduz and Tezer (2015) conducted a survey of 144 female and 110 male teacher candidates from six different fields which are Computer Education and Instructional Technologies, Turkish, Mathematics for Primary School, Primary School Teaching, Pre-School Teaching and Psychology Counseling, and Guidance in Ataturk Education Faculty at Near East University, Turkey. The purpose of the survey was to find out the perception of the teacher candidates towards Community Service Learning course. The results showed that community service learning course empowers teacher candidates in terms of socialization, personal development, social responsibility and awareness to community needs. It also benefits faculty and community. Interestingly, the finding also revealed that the attitudes of female teachers' candidates were more positive than males, in terms of socialization.

Furthermore, other researchers studied medical students' experiences in community service from Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLLSOM), National University of Singapore (Zi et al., 2016). The purposes of the study were to investigate (a) motivations in community service participation, (b) nature of community service projects, and (c) student-reported outcomes of community service. It was found that motivations in community service increased from past experiences, present motivations, and future hopes, which has led most of them to encourage other people to join in the service. The researchers also discovered that students had higher empathy levels, improved communication and organization skills, decision-making, interpersonal, and leadership skills when they participated in community service project.

In addition, Andrew (2001) carried out a study of community members from the twenty community-based organisations that participated in CalServe service learning grant projects to examine the experiences of community members involved in service learning projects, which received CalServe Existing Expanded, Sustainable, or Leadership grants in California. From his research, he concluded that although time, communication, reluctance, and follow-through impeded students' service learning, the benefits of service learning greatly outweighed the challenges. He believed that service learning gives benefits to community members and their organizations by providing an avenue for the development of relationships between schools and nonprofit agencies.

2.3 Benefits of Community Service

The advantages of service learning are well documented in the literature. Numerous researchers have posited that participation in community service provides essential developmental benefits for students and asserts robust relationships between community service and positive learning outcomes in higher education. For instance, to ascertain the significance of community service on students' learning, Soykan, Gunduz and Tezer (2015) conducted pre-service teachers' perception on community service learning course. Based on the result, Soykan, Gunduz and Tezer (2015) concluded that community service learning has positive effects on pre-service teachers' self-efficacy, desire for life learning, social empowerment, and professionalism with the universities in achieving their aims of becoming centers of excellence and also pave the way for outstanding graduates and citizens. Furthermore, a case study of the Social Innovation Internship course at the Sarawak campus of Swinburne University of Technology also revealed that academic service-learning had given numerous opportunities to students in learning about collaborating with partners, managing small

community businesses, learning about ideals and beliefs that makes a person into what he or she is (Kwang-Sing, Mung-Ling & Miin-Huui, 2017).

Other benefits of community service engagement to students include it increases students' self-esteem, self-knowledge, communication, problem solving, and social skills (Andrew, 2001). Moreover, service learning has been shown to positively impact college students' attitudes toward individuals with disabilities (Lawson, Cruz & Knollman, 2017), develop valuable and marketable skills (Erickson, 2010), and improve students' knowledge, abilities and attitudes (Victoria, Raul, Jordi, Eva Maria, Joan Maria, Manuel et al., 2017). According to Eyler and Giles (1999 cited in Carnicelli & Boluk, 2017, p. 128), the objectives of service learning include equipping students with knowledge to better understand the world and preparing them for the job market as well as enhancing their critical thinking skills. In addition, Soykan, Gunduz and Tezer (2015) in their study discovered that one of the students reflected that the experiences gained from the community service were useful for his future profession and the society involved. This means that community service has impacted students in positive ways. It is also important to note that engaging students in community services also allows them to participate, provide meaningful work, and reflect upon organised activities that meet identified community needs (Clevenger & Ozbek, 2013; Shephard, 2008 cited in Molderez & Fonseca, 2017, p. 4400). In this way, they can apply classroom content and knowledge to real-life situations through learning by experience. Also, students who participated in community service learning developed more social responsibility, personal development, socialization, and awareness to community needs (Soykan, Gunduz & Tezer, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

The main aims of this study were to investigate the positive impacts of engaging higher education students with the local community through community services and the challenges they faced. Fifty Pre-TESL students at UiTM Cawangan Melaka, Kampus Alor Gajah, Melaka worked collaboratively with the English Club in selected primary schools in the Alor Gajah vicinity by carrying out a full day and a one-off English programme with primary four to six students.

Two groups, with a total of thirty-six female students and fourteen male students, were involved in two English programmes – one group conducted the “English Motivational Camp” programme with SK Alor Gajah 1 and, another group conducted the “Fun with English” programme with Sekolah Kebangsaan Lendu. The executions of the programmes were facilitated by their Pre-TESL lecturers. Nonetheless, students had to independently manage and carry out the programmes themselves.

Data was collected through surveys using open-ended questions which were distributed upon the completion of the one-off community service programmes to thirty selected Pre-TESL participants from seven bureaus (ranging from one project manager, plus one head of unit and one committee member from the seven bureaus from each school project). The structured open-ended questions ranged from what were their roles in the community service, what experiences they liked and disliked, what they had learned, benefits they gained from the project, challenges they faced, and how they overcame the challenges. Students were given forty to sixty minutes to provide their reflections, comments and feedback.

Apart from the survey carried out, participants were also asked to write journals based on their experiences before, during, and after their project. The participants were asked to handwrite their journal entries daily or weekly in about a minimum of one page per entry on any exercise books or loose papers and to submit the journal at the end of the project. Unfortunately, when the journal entries were collected after the project was completed, all the participants wrote about their daily or weekly activities. Hence, this instrument (journal entry) was not used for the research analysis as the entries did not serve to provide insights into the objectives of this research paper. When asked about their entries, students claimed that writing a journal was like writing down things they did daily just like writing a diary. Thus, the journal entries were not analysed for the purpose of this research and only the data from the structured open-ended survey were mined and analysed to provide insights into students' thoughts.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aims to study the positive impact of engaging in community services and also to identify the challenges participants faced in their journey.

4.1 Positive Impacts of Engaging in Community Service

Based on students' written responses, the researchers concluded that there were positive impacts of engaging in community service among UiTM Melaka Pre-TESL students in carrying out the teaching activities in the two primary schools in the Alor Gajah vicinity. Three main themes were derived such as (i) gaining valuable experiences as students engaged in real-life teaching experiences in primary schools, (2) developing interpersonal and leadership skills as students managed the project, and (3) improving students' communication skills.

4.1.1 Gained Valuable Experiences through Engagement in Real-Life Teaching Experiences

When the students were asked what they liked about the community service project, all the thirty students commented that they liked doing the "English Motivational Camp" and "Fun with English" programmes in the two primary schools. In general, they said that they had gained valuable experiences from undergoing the community service projects. Ten students wrote that they would apply their experiences in their future and professional life.

The Pre-TESL students obtained positive experiences to actually manage and handle school students with various behaviours in the classrooms. They commented that managing and handling students in school classrooms had helped them to gain insights into what teachers and students went through and how teachers managed various students in various classroom activities, even though it was only a one day experience. One participant responded about the benefit of learning experiences gained from handling students with different behaviours by commenting,

We learn to know how to handle and manage the students with different behaviours. This also helped us in engaging in real-life experiences to improve our learning as all of us are going to be teachers one day. In everyday life, it is normal for teachers to experience unpleasant situations in class.

Similarly, another student perceived about experiencing and learning new things through the community service project:

We do not deny there were problems and obstacles here and there but we managed to overcome them. All in all, it was a very wonderful experience for us. We also learned a lot of new things from teaching the children and it is a memory we shall always cherish.

The experiences and lessons that the Pre-TESL students obtained from being exposed to the actual teaching activities in actual primary school classrooms helped them to cherish their visions to become future teachers. This is in line with the study done by Soykan, Gunduz and Tezer (2015) that community service learning projects helped participant to enrich his or her future career and that experience would benefit the community in general.

In addition, two Pre-TESL students also stated that such experiences would help to shape them to become dedicated teachers due to their experiences in teaching primary school students, and they appreciated the interaction with students, teachers, and other staffs. They stated that from their experiences, they hoped to become dedicated teachers and as these projects had ensured them to be in contact with the school Headmaster, Head Department of English subject, several prefects and students, the clerks and canteen vendors in order for them to prepare and execute the project. In addition, one Pre-TESL student said he was happy when he got comments from three of the primary school students in his group who

thanked him and said that they liked being taught English by the sisters and brothers from the nearby UiTM campus.

In fact, the Pre-TESL students gained actual experiences related to their future career which were teaching and completing events and school projects on their own. It could be said that by undergoing the school projects, the students were given the opportunities to put theory into practice and also gained exposure into the teaching profession because they had to undergo teaching tasks and faced issues in an actual school community. This is true in terms of university students getting a better understanding of meeting the needs of community (Clevenger & Ozbek, 2013; Shephard, 2008 cited in Molderez & Fonseca, 2017)

4.1.2 *Developed Interpersonal and Leadership Skills*

Generally, the fifty students carried out the community service projects teaching English for primary school students. In order to carry out the school projects, the Pre-TESL students portrayed interpersonal and leadership skills including adaptability or flexibility, teamwork skills, and project management skills.

Firstly, an important interpersonal skill the Pre-TESL students developed was being adaptable and flexible to overcome problems that arose in their teaching activities. A student claimed that as his team carried out their school project, and encountered unexpected events, however this team managed to handle them well:

During the project, the unexpected event that happened was when there were several students who were fighting among themselves. We overcome this problem by giving them sweets and treats as reward in order for them to stop fighting.

Then, working in a team is also essential. Two students stated that the projects made them become aware of the significance of teamwork to handle projects. Working successfully in a team is important in a community service (Clinton & Thomas, 2011). One of the Pre-TESL students stated the following:

Other than that, we gave our full commitment and worked hard on it. We believed that only with teamwork, we could successfully achieve the objectives of this programme". Meanwhile another student said, "We worked together as a team and everything was a success, just as planned. We believe that teamwork is very important to make the project successful.

In addition, another student felt that teamwork amongst various bureaus and group members were very essential to run the project and to make sure that the activities were completed successfully,

We can say that during the school project, all members of the Food Committee gave cooperation and worked as a team. On the day of the motivational camp that our class had organised, we had successfully transferred the food packages from the transportation to the school canteen and served them to the school children. We were glad that everyone lent a hand.

Apart from teamwork, students stated that community service exposed them to being involved in meaningful community activities. A study done by Clevenger and Ozbek (2013 cited in Molderez & Fonseca, 2017), also agreed that community service provided meaningful work to the students who participated in the community service. Interestingly, the Pre-TESL students organised a Book Donation Drive for students in Sekolah Kebangsaan Alor Gajah (1). They collected English story books and donated the books to the school so that the primary school students would have more English story books available in their school libraries. This showed that Pre-TESL students could run a philanthropy act of book donation drive by themselves.

Finally, in order for the students to manage the projects on their own, the students had also learnt about ways to assign individual and group roles within various bureaus, manage paperwork and activities, plan and organise time wisely, tackle primary school students in different ways to get their attention to carry out the learning activities, learn to be patient with their peers and the primary school students, and plan the project thoroughly to ensure that the projects and activities were executed smoothly. These skills were very

essential for them to apply in their real-life situations and professional life. For instance, a student stated that:

There were students who were shy, students who were very active, and even students who cried easily. We had to tackle these types of students during our programme and it taught us on what the teachers have to face in school every day.

One student also mentioned that the school project required her to think out of the box and made her and her team to become creative thinkers as they were given the tasks to do a donation drive to donate English story books to the school. As claimed by one student,

We learnt to think outside of our norms and brainstormed our ideas (visit class to class and sell button batch) and opinions for the Book Donation Drive Programme.

Moreover, one student claimed that throughout the project, they motivated one another and chipped in ideas for their respective committees. A student commented:

We have shown our support for each other and contributed in opinions and suggestions for the committee.

As mentioned by Clinton and Thomas (2011), the purposes of community service are to highlight students' awareness towards the wider community, enhance communication skill, create development in students' personal, ethical and, spiritual abilities, obtain teamwork skills to work successfully, write written reports and enhanced ability to analyse and reflect upon their experiences. Therefore, service learning brings positive outcomes to students by achieving interpersonal and leadership skills while managing this project.

4.1.3 Improved Communication Skill

Improved communication skill was one of the positive impacts students gained from community service. The Pre-TESL students mentioned that in undergoing the community service projects, they learnt how to communicate effectively. One student voiced out that, *“through this training, Pre-TESL students learn how to communicate with students of the rural area and they can use techniques that are suitable for students of elementary level of education”*. In addition, some Pre-TESL students stated that their communication skills have considerably improved after engaging in the community service projects.

The Pre-TESL students had to learn on how to communicate with the school to get necessary information. For example, the students had to go to the primary schools prior to conducting the school programme to get information from the teachers and the school staff with regards to the nature and details of the students they were going to teach, the location of the school assembly, library, facilities, and classrooms for them to prepare and time the activities for treasure hunt and vocabulary activities. In addition, they also encountered various experiences to communicate with rural area primary school students with different levels of English language proficiency. Therefore, in order to execute the English language activities, they had to use various communication skills and try out various techniques to get the primary school children to participate in their activities.

4.2 Challenges Faced by the Pre-TESL Students

The Pre-TESL students involved in the community service project of conducting a one-day English programme reported that they had experienced a myriad of challenges in order to make their school programme successful. The challenges faced are further described in the following sections:

4.2.1 Doing Research and Lack of Knowledge

In order for the students to carry out the school project, the Pre-TESL students had to do a background research about the schools, teachers, and students participating in the programme. They also had to prepare

paperwork, study and assign roles of being committee members and facilitators, design classroom activities, arrange transportation, food, and catering services. Due to the lack of knowledge about doing projects or being facilitators as well as teaching primary school students, they regarded the preparation work prior to the programme as well as managing the programme as one of their challenges. For example, a participant from the food committee commented,

As the Food Committee, we didn't have to go buy all the food from outside the campus as we used the catering service within campus. So at first, we didn't have any problems regarding the transportation. However, a few days before the day of the school project, we realized that we needed a transportation to fetch and transport food to the school on our own. However, we managed to rent a car and the food was transported successfully on time.

In order for the Pre-TESL students to carry out the project that involved outside parties, the students had to find out more about who they were dealing with. Thus, making plans and preparations were also important in undergoing any class projects.

4.2.2 *Juggling Between Work and Managing Time Effectively*

The Pre-TESL students had to find time to do short discussions during class breaks to divide tasks as well as to monitor the progress of various bureaus because they were also busy with learning tasks such as presentations, assignments, and tests. A participant stated that,

We are having a lot of difficulties to have a meet up with all the members every day due to reasons that some of us were involved in college activities. The solution is that we took one day to do the brainstorming about our committee and we spent the whole day to discuss about the arrangements and everything.

Time constraint is another challenge discussed by Andrew, 2001. Many students were found to encounter problems to balance one's commitment when they get involved in community service practices. Students found negative influence on their academic work, particularly the lack of time to study. For example, they had to attend meetings, visit-project sites, and prepare paperwork related to the project and this use up a lot of their time (Andrew, 2001).

4.2.3 *Challenges as Facilitators*

Participants faced various challenges as facilitators in the English language programme.

Matching Expectations

Firstly, one of the challenges that facilitators of the school project faced was to meet the expectations of the primary school students who were in the programme. The facilitators felt anxious and worried that the primary school students who were selected to join the English programme had certain expectations towards their one-day programme. For example, one girl commented about this by saying that she and her friends had various questions before the event took place. Questions such as "*Was it going to be fun? Was it going to help their English?*" came to her and her friends' minds. However, when the Pre-TESL students had met the primary school students, she said that she and her friends were relieved that the primary school students were very eager and excited for the activities.

In fact, the Pre-TESL students felt the challenges to teach primary school students coming from the rural area, who they had expected to have low proficiency in the English language. Another student commented that the main goal of the facilitators was to encourage the primary school students to express their ideas in English. Hence, the Pre-TESL students expressed their worries with the fact that the rural primary school children (in Alor Gajah) were less proficient in English. However, during the day of the programme itself, when the primary school students showed that they were excited and eager to learn English together with the university students, the facilitators became motivated to conduct the language

activities. Zi et al. (2016) also stated that community services involvement helped to increase student motivation.

Overcoming Awkwardness

The next challenge as facilitators was to overcome their awkwardness as facilitators. For example, one facilitator stated that,

As this was our first time of being the facilitators, we had some awkward moments in the first activity, Break the Ice. In the activity, we introduced ourselves but the students were a bit shy to introduce themselves, speaking in English. Later on we explained to the students that it did not matter if they were wrong, that is the reason why this programme is held, which was to help them to enhance their English. Therefore, confidence and perseverance helped both parties – participants (Pre-TESL) and subjects (primary students) to overcome these challenges.

This could mean that this community service was their first experience as all of them had just finished their secondary school education. They had never actually been involved in conducting a project on their own. Generally, they would find this first time experience as something awkward to them. However, by overcoming their feeling of awkwardness and working together with the primary school children, they were able to complete the activities.

Two-way Communication using English Language

The next challenge as facilitators was to motivate the primary students to converse in English and share their thoughts with the facilitators. They faced challenges to obtain a two-way communication with the school children especially since their English programme was conducted in a rural area primary school. As commented by one of the participants,

Of course, it was hard to help these students to break out from their comfort zone and to share their thoughts. For this task, it was really challenging as most of the students in our group had no confidence in conversing in English so they didn't really want to talk. Nonetheless, after a few tries of trying to brighten up the environment, they opened up a little by little.

Students Have Different Personalities and Attitudes

The participants faced challenges to teach because they found out that a group of ten mixed -ability students had different personalities and attitudes. One participant commented,

Not to forget the challenge where we had to entertain 10 different behaviours from each student in our group. After breaking the ice session, we got to know each other well and their real behaviours start to come out, which was fine because some of them were really funny and enlightening. But as time goes by, after lunch time to be precise, they tend to get very active and it was hard to control 10 individuals although there was two of us as facilitators. Personally, I believed we handled our group quite well as they listened to us and did what we told them to do which was, to sit quietly.

Through the hands-on teaching experience, the Pre-TESL students were able to experience first-hand teaching experiences in handling a large group of primary students who had various attitudes and personalities. The Pre-TESL had worked hard facing the challenges as facilitators and learnt positively from doing the school projects.

Working in a Team to Run Big Projects Was Not Easy

The Pre-TESL students also faced challenges of working within units and bureaus as different group members had different opinions and perspectives. One of the Pre-TESL students said,

Working in a team has never been easy. Our team is not excluded. Nonetheless, our team were able to work things out and avoid any misunderstandings and arguments. Being the activity bureau was not easy. There were a lot of things to plan for example the suitable activities and the props and materials needed. There were some arguments during the discussion, but in the end we managed to agree on the best activities for this project. On the

day of the project, we worked together as a team and everything was a success, just as planned. By the end of the project, it has brought us closer to each other.

In brief, the Pre-TESL students learned that it was important to work as a team in order to handle the challenges and resolve the various issues together.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the UiTM Melaka Pre-TESL students were grateful to be given the precious chance to participate in the project. In general, the school project seemed to benefit the Pre-TESL students. The pedagogical implications of the findings indicated that by participating in hands-on community services of conducting English language programme in schools enabled tertiary students to learn and gain first-hand experience of teaching English. It was an exposure and a learning process for the tertiary students to experience a glimpse into the real teaching environment. The engagement in the community services helped them to learn important lessons such as engaging in real-life teaching experiences, developing interpersonal and leadership skills to manage projects independently, enhancing communication skills, facing various challenges to juggle their studies and completing a school project on their own at the same time, facing challenges of being facilitators and committee members, and working in a team in order to make sure that the community service school projects were done successfully. In brief, the community service project was one of the valuable experiences they encountered in their Pre-TESL studies.

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