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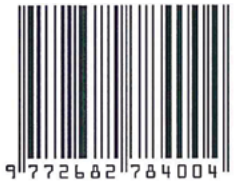

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TABLE of CONTENTS

A STUDY ON THE MODERN TRANSFORMATION AND DESIGN OF JIESHOU PAINTED POTTERY PATTERNS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SHAPE GRAMMAR 1 -15
Li Bo Hao[1*] & Musnin Misdih [2]

ENHANCING CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING THROUGH ENGLISH ORAL PRESENTATIONS IN ONLINE LEARNING: A CONCEPTUAL EXPLORATION 16 -29
Majdah Chulan[1*], Mohamad Fadhili Yahaya[2] & Latisha Asmaak Shafie[3]

A STUDY OF BABA-NYONYA'S EMBROIDERY STITCH TECHNIQUES IN THE LATE 19TH-EARLY 20TH CENTURY 30 - 45
Chen XiuMian[1*] , Rose Dahlina Rusli[2],Rohana Binti Zur[3] & Kang Sujuan[4]

ANALYSING THE SUSTAINABILITY OF AN ART CAREER FROM THE CAREGIVERS' EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVE FOR AUTISTIC INDIVIDUALS 46 - 67
Izza Syahida Abdul Karim[*1,] Wan Noor Faaizah Wan Omar[2], Azyyati Anuar[3], & Azlyn Ahmad Zawawi[4]

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCANSERVE – SMART QR-DRIVEN SUMMONS APPLICATION FOR STREAMLINED DISCIPLINARY CASE MANAGEMENT: A STEP TOWARDS A SMART CAMPUS 68 - 85
Wan Fariza Wan Abdul Rahman[1*] & Nur Athirah Su'aidah Abu Samah[2]

THE INFLUENCE OF WOMEN'S EARNING STATUS AND OTHER SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS ON THEIR HEALTHCARE-SEEKING BEHAVIOR: EVIDENCE FROM THE BANGLADESH HOUSEHOLD INCOME AND EXPENDITURE SURVEY, 2016 86 - 106
Shahnaz Haque[1,2] & Saidatulakmal Mohd[134*]

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODIFIED CORPORATE RISK DISCLOSURE INDEX FOR BUSINESS SUSTAINABILITY 107 - 123
Nur Syahira Rashadan[1*], Corina Joseph[2], Muhammad Hariz Hamid[3], & Sharifah Norzehan Syed Yusuf[4]

EXPLORE CHINESE LACQUER ART CULTURE–EGGSHELL INLAY TECHNIQUE 124 - 139
Rao DongYu[1*], Azahar Harun[2] & Li YiXuan[3]

BUILDING SUSTAINABLE MINDS: EMBEDDING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN LEARNING 140 - 148
Seri Ayu Masuri Md Daud[1] , Tuan Zainun Tuan Mat[1], Fadzlina Mohd Fahmi[1] & Norli Ali [1,2*]

CLIMATE CHANGE AND ITS IMPACT ON THE MALAYSIAN STOCK INDEX 149 - 164
Bee-Hoong Tay[1*], Norhasniza Mohd Hasan Abdullah[2] & Masitah Omar[3]

PENERIMAAN PELAJAR UITM DALAM PEMBELAJARAN KOSA KATA ARAB MENGGUNAKAN APLIKASI MUFRADATI 165 - 180
Muhamad Khairul Anuar Zulkepli[1], Mohd Zulkhairi Abd Hamid[2], Burhanuddin Wahab[3], Ahmad Fauzi Yahaya[4], & Norhayuza Mohamad[5]

EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, RELIGIOUSITY AND POLICY, RULES AND REGULATION ON BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE TOWARDS GREEN LIFESTYLE 181 - 198
Noor Zahirah Mohd Sidek[1*]

EXPLORING CULTURAL AND CREATIVE PRODUCT DESIGN THROUGH DETERMINING THE SIGNIFICANCE CHARACTERISTICS OF HONGSHAN POTTERY PATTERN 199 - 223
Lin Lin[1], Nur Hisham Bin Ibrahim[2*] & Neesa Ameera Binti Mohamed Salim[3]

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BUILDING SUSTAINABLE MINDS: EMBEDDING GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP IN LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the effectiveness of the Service Learning Malaysia University for Society (SULAM) project in promoting knowledge sharing and fostering global citizenship among students. The SULAM initiative, a collaborative effort between Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA), aims to provide students with practical experience in addressing real-world challenges faced by international Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). This study, drawing on comments from supervising lecturers and community partners involved in the project, explores the impact of the SULAM programme on students' development of global competency and practical skills. The findings highlight the significance of active engagement, teamwork, and collaboration in enhancing students' understanding of global issues and their ability to navigate complex problems. Furthermore, the SULAM programme's alignment with learning outcomes related to practical and entrepreneurial skills accentuates its role in preparing students to become active contributors to global society. Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on service learning and highlights the importance of experiential learning initiatives in promoting global citizenship and sustainable development.

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1. Introduction

This paper examines the effectiveness of the Service-Learning Malaysia University for Society (SULAM) project in promoting knowledge sharing and fostering global citizenship among students. The SULAM initiative, a collaborative effort between Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA), aims to provide students with practical experience in addressing real-world challenges faced by international Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs). Drawing on comments from supervising lecturers involved in the project, this study explores the impact of the SULAM programme on students' development and practical skills. The findings highlight the significance of active engagement, teamwork, and collaboration in enhancing students' understanding of global issues and their ability to navigate complex problems. Furthermore, the SULAM programme's alignment with learning outcomes related to practical and entrepreneurial skills accentuates its role in preparing students to become active contributors to global society. Overall, this research contributes to the growing body of literature on service learning and highlights the importance of experiential learning initiatives in promoting global citizenship and sustainable development.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. The next section provides background on the integration of global citizenship and sustainability into higher education curricula, followed by a discussion on how the SULAM initiative serves as an effective platform for this integration. The subsequent section describes the specific SULAM project from which the study's data was collected. This is followed by a discussion of the research method and findings. The paper concludes with a summary of key insights and implications.

2. Literature Review

Global Citizenship and Sustainability in University Curricula

The focus on global learning in higher education has increased significantly since the beginning of the 21st century and is now a common goal for many universities (Massaro, 2022). Kraska et al. (2018) highlight that academics and researchers often link internationalisation to marketisation, international competition, the recruitment and exchange of students. Shiel and Mann (2006) contend that fostering global citizenship requires students to adopt a global perspective, recognising the interconnectedness of their lives with people worldwide. This foundational understanding, coupled with exposure to global issues, processes, internationalisation, and sustainable development through both the university curriculum and extracurricular activities, equip students with the values, attitudes, and skills necessary for global citizenship.

Aktas et al. (2017) found that most programmes designed to promote global citizenship, based on a sample from 24 institutions across five countries, aimed to provide students with skills and knowledge relevant to the global economy. However, they observed a diverse array of programmes, with none adhering to a standardised curriculum. Each programme demonstrated a unique approach to preparing students for the global economy, emphasising adaptability over a rigid formulaic structure.

In a recent study, Massaro (2022) conducted a systematic review of the literature to explore the examination, measurement, and implementation of global citizenship within higher education institutions. The results highlighted that fostering global citizenship has emerged as a pivotal learning goal in higher education, aiming to provide students with the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes for active participation as conscientious global citizens. This objective is typically

pursued through two primary avenues: extracurricular activities and integration of global citizenship goals into the curriculum.

Past studies like Perry, et. al (2013), Udvari and Vizi (2023), and many others highlighted that the integration of global citizenship into the curriculum can be achieved through various methods, including flipped classrooms, service learning, short courses abroad, student exchange programmes, elective courses, university courses, and university programmes. Examples of university programmes encompass flexible curriculum options, twinning programmes, and capstone projects, among others. Those studies showed that the emphasis on global learning in higher education is essential in preparing students to navigate and contribute to an increasingly interconnected world. By integrating global perspectives and issues into their education, universities can cultivate globally minded citizens ready to address the complex challenges of the 21st century.

The objective of this paper is to examine the integration of global citizenship and sustainability competencies into the curriculum through the adoption of a service learning approach. Specifically, this paper seeks to analyse the pedagogical insights derived from the implementation of SULAM, a concept rooted in service learning principles aimed at cultivating community engagement within higher education. Spearheaded by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education, SULAM embodies an inventive educational strategy with potential implications for teaching and learning paradigms.

3. SULAM: An Approach to AchievING Global CitizenSHIP and Sustainability Competences

There is a compelling argument to suggest that universities and colleges hold a responsibility in developing international curricula that foster heightened global awareness among students. In recent years, a growing number of higher education institutions have embraced "internationalisation" as a core strategy. This obligation may arise from their educational mandate or in response to the increasing societal emphasis on cultivating global consciousness among future generations. In tandem with this shift towards internationalisation, universities and colleges are recognising the need to equip students with the skills and perspectives necessary to thrive in an interconnected world. International service learning emerges as a powerful vehicle for achieving this goal, providing a platform for students to situate their lives within a global context and deepen their understanding of cultural diversity, thus playing a pivotal role in fostering global citizenship and promoting sustainability.

Aligned with SDG 4 Quality Education, particularly its 7th Target on Global Citizenship, this section delves into a service learning initiative undertaken jointly by Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia (UiTM), and Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang (UNSIKA), Indonesia. The initiative aims to foster global-mindedness and sustainability among the younger generations. The primary objective of the SULAM programme is to immerse students in authentic societal challenges and to expose students to international business culture (Tuan Zainun, Seri Ayu, and Fadzlina, 2023). Through this initiative, students gain practical experience and learn to apply theoretical knowledge from the classroom to address real-world issues. By navigating diverse cultural contexts and understanding global economic systems through hands-on projects, students develop collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving abilities crucial for effective global citizenship in today's interconnected world.

Integrated into the capstone course, Integrated Case Study coded MAF671, of Bachelor in Accounting (Hons) at the Faculty of Accountancy, UiTM, the SULAM programme is tailored to provide practical assistance with financial management challenges faced by MSEs. The SULAM

programme is structured to align with two distinct learning outcomes: Practical Skills and Entrepreneurial Skills, both of which are essential for fostering global citizenship.

4. THE MAF671 SULAM PROJECT

The project adopts a case study approach, wherein several MSEs were selected as the subject of the case project. This educational exercise involved a comprehensive analysis of a real scenario, requiring participants to draw upon various disciplines and knowledge to address complex problems. Boyd (1991) and Jackson (1998) assert that the case study method is rooted in analysis, discussion, and decision-making. In the context of the SULAM project, students were presented with a case that simulates real-world business situations encountered by the organisation (Tuan Zainun, Seri Ayu Masuri, and Fadzlina, 2023).

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the MSE's owner-managers. Students were expected to analyse the data obtained to identify problems and areas for improvement and provide recommendations. The findings were then presented to the client, and a copy of the Business Advisory Report was submitted for their reference.

Assessments were conducted by both educators and MSEs, focusing on the quality and feasibility of the recommendations provided. Evaluation criteria included teamwork, communication skills, problem-solving abilities, and analytical thinking. Upon returning to the university, students were required to prepare a critical reflection on the project aligning with the approach proposed by Perry et al. (2013) that emphasises action-oriented experiences. Perry et al. (2013) argue that many nations are leveraging international education as a means to cultivate global citizenship. However, they caution against a simplistic "just do it" approach, suggesting that it may not be effective. Instead, they advocate for active participation that encourages reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis, serving as an effective catalyst for meaningful learning and development.

During the period between 2022 and mid-2024, three UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM projects were conducted, which are further described below.

4. 1 First UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM Project, 1 December 2022 – 10 February 2023

The first UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM Project, held in December 2022 – February 2023, was conducted in a hybrid mode due to issues related to the post-COVID-19 crisis. It involved virtual participation by UiTM students and physical engagement by students at UNSIKA. While UNSIKA students performed tasks physically with the MSE industry partner, the owner-manager of an MSE in Karawang, Indonesia, UiTM's counterparts advised and interviewed the client virtually. Students' findings and analyses were then presented to the owner-manager of the MSE. Figure 1 exhibits a collection of photos during SULAM activities.

Figure 1: First UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM Project, 1 December 2022 – 10 February 2023

4.2 Second UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM Project, 29 May – 4 June 2023

The second SULAM project, held from May 29 to June 4, 2023, saw the participation of a group of 10 students from UiTM, Malaysia, and 25 students from UNSIKA, Indonesia, in Karawang, Indonesia. The community partner for this project was a family-owned MSE in Karawang, Indonesia. Additionally, the programme provided students with opportunities to engage in volunteerism projects, participate in industrial visits, and attend research talks as part of their learning experience, all of which contributed to their development as global citizens.

4.3 Third UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM Project, 1 April – 31 July 2024

The third SULAM project, held from April 1 to July 31, 2024, involved 15 students from UiTM, Malaysia, and 10 students from UNSIKA, Indonesia, in Sabak Bernam, Malaysia as shown in Figure 1. The community partner for this project was a family-owned MSE in Sungai Besar, Selangor. The programme also offered students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the local culture by staying in Sungai Besar for three days and two nights, allowing them to engage with the community and gain a deeper understanding of local traditions and activities. These experiences significantly contributed to their development as global citizens.

Figure 1: Third UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM Project, 1 April – 31 July 2024

5. Methodology

Data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews with 3 supervising lecturers from UiTM and UNSIKA who were involved in the three aforementioned UiTM-UNSIKA SULAM projects. The interviews were conducted with durations ranging from 5 to 10 minutes and an average duration of 7.5 minutes. Interviews were conducted through a phone call and Whatsapp. Table I lists the interviewees' gender, affiliation and the duration of each interview.

Table 1:
Profile of the interviewees

Interviewee	Gender	Affiliation	Duration (minutes)
No 1	Male	UiTM	10
No 2	Female	UiTM	5 and Written response
No 3	Male	UNSIKA	Written response

6. Results and Discussion

The following section presents the insights gathered from interviews conducted with teaching lecturers from both UiTM and UNSIKA regarding the effectiveness of the SULAM program in promoting global citizenship among students.

Lecturer 1 underscored the programme's emphasis on teamwork and collaboration with international counterparts to address challenges encountered by international MSE. This active engagement necessitates effective communication throughout the planning, execution, and presentation stages of SULAM tasks. Consequently, students develop their global competency as they collaborate with peers and advisors from diverse backgrounds to identify and solve complex problems. In his own words: 'It may help our students to become competent global citizens since they work in a team together with their international counterparts to find and solve issues of international MSEs. This project requires active communication during the planning stage, engagement and presentation of SULAM tasks. Hence it should build up their global competency via teamwork and collaboration formed with international students and advisors to solve problems identified'.

This feedback highlights the significant role of the SULAM programme in fostering global citizenship among students through hands-on experiences that promote cross-cultural understanding and critical thinking skills. Through collaborative efforts to address real-world challenges, students emerge with enhanced capabilities to navigate the complexities of our interconnected world.

Lecturer 2 commented on the exceptional success of the SULAM activities, as quoted from UiTM News Hub:"Our students wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity to apply their accounting and management technical knowledge and skills to real-world situations, working closely with the local community. Through their active engagement, they not only gained invaluable practical experience but also fostered strong relationships with the people they served. This SULAM project exemplifies the power of collaboration, experiential learning, and community engagement."

Lecturer 3 expressed gratitude for the positive response and experience gained by students at UNSIKA, stating: "This visit has been an incredible opportunity for our students to broaden their horizons, gain exposure to different cultures, and exchange knowledge with their counterparts at UNSIKA. We are thrilled to have been able to collaborate with such a prestigious institution and hope to strengthen these ties in the future".

These positive findings are consistent with prior research on the integration of global citizenship and sustainability into academic curricula. Perry et al. (2013) focused on the effectiveness of short-term study abroad programmes for students in higher education institutions in the United States. Their study highlighted that when these programmes are accompanied by a robust pedagogical framework, they create transformative learning environments that facilitate the development of new perspectives and experiences. Additionally, a recent study by Udvari and Vizi (2023) further supported this notion, illustrating that university programmes, particularly those employing educational methods like the flipped classroom and global citizenship education initiatives, contribute significantly to the cultivation of global citizenship. Their research, which involved 44 bachelor degree students at a Hungarian university, emphasised the potential of university courses to enhance global competencies, albeit with varying degrees of effectiveness.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the SULAM programme stands as a beacon of success in promoting global citizenship among students, as evidenced by the findings from interviews with teaching lecturers, feedback from community partners, and insights from previous studies. By immersing themselves in real-world challenges and interacting with diverse communities, students gain a deeper understanding of global issues and develop empathy, cultural sensitivity, and a sense of responsibility towards addressing global challenges. Moreover, the SULAM programme is structured to align with two distinct learning outcomes: Practical Skills and Entrepreneurial Skills, both of which are essential for fostering global citizenship.

Through active engagement with international MSEs and hands-on experiences, students not only acquire practical skills but also cultivate a global mindset and a strong sense of social responsibility. This holistic approach to education empowers students to become active contributors to global society, equipped with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to create positive change and promote sustainable development on a global scale.

In essence, the SULAM programme exemplifies the transformative potential of service learning initiatives in higher education. By integrating action-oriented experiences, reflective practices, and cross-cultural collaboration, the programme prepares students to navigate the complexities of our interconnected world with confidence and competence. As universities continue to prioritise initiatives like SULAM, they play a crucial role in shaping the next generation of global leaders who are committed to building a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world.

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Authors Contributions
SAMMD and TZTM carried out the introduction and the brief overview of the SULAM project. SAMMD, TZTM and FMF supervised the project and engaged with community partners. NA wrote the literature review section, obtained feedback from the teaching lecturers and supervisors, and reported the findings. SAMMD conducted the proof-reading and acted as reviewer for the final draft prior to submission.

Conflict of Interest
"None declared"

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