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## Service-learning Pedagogy: Traceability to Students' Academic Performance in Federal Universities in Nigeria

**Stephen I. Dugguh**

Professor, Department of Business Administration,  
Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria

**Dr. M.N. Ugochukwu**

Senior Lecturer, Department of Business Administration,  
Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria

**Jennifer M. Yina**

Student, Department of Business Administration,  
Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria

**Freeman J. T. Dugguh**

Engineer, Department of Project, Dangote Refinery, Lekki, Lagos, Nigeria

### **Abstract:**

*The paper investigates the extent of influence of service-learning pedagogy on academic performance among students of Federal Universities in Nigeria with a particular focus on Federal University of Kashere, Gombe, Nigeria. Service-learning is an educational approach that combines classroom instruction with community service that enhances both academic learning and community engagement. It has gained prominence as a means for enhancing student engagement and learning outcomes. Research studies in many universities emphasized the imperative of engaging university students in the transition from the traditional method of learning to a more dynamic approach that involves active learning, teaching, researching and community service, which indeed aids the students' academic performance. A noteworthy strategy in this domain is service-learning, which enables students to apply their knowledge, skills and abilities to address community challenges. Despite being introduced in a few Nigerian universities, service-learning remains a novel concept within the Nigerian educational system. Therefore, the paper seeks to determine the extent to which service-learning influences or affects students' academic performance and contributes to community engagement. Data were collected through secondary data sources and semi-structured interviews with respondents. The result indicates that service-learning programs significantly influence or impact the academic performance of students in Federal Universities in Nigeria. The paper recommends that service-learning should be taught at all levels in all Federal Universities in Nigeria so that the academic performance and community engagement of the students would be enhanced.*

**Keywords:** Service-learning, pedagogy, reflection, performance, community engagement, federal universities, Nigeria

### **1. Introduction**

In recent years, service-learning has gained traction as an innovative approach to education, particularly in higher institutions of learning at the global level. To many researchers, service-learning is pedagogy: a teaching and learning strategy that emphasizes the integration of classroom learning with community service, allowing students to apply theoretical knowledge in real-world settings while addressing societal challenges. Very few Federal Universities in Nigeria have embraced this approach as part of their curriculum to enhance both academic learning and community development.

Recent research has shown that service-learning has significantly influenced students' academic performance in the context of creating awareness about the dangers of the Ukraine-Russia war, the conflict in Sudan, the recent happenings in Niger Republic, the COVID-19 pandemic, peace and conflict situations (such as those addressed by the United Nations), out of school children, etc. Taking the Ukraine-Russia War, for instance, service-learning has helped students gain a deeper understanding of the effects of international war/conflicts, human rights issues, and the importance of diplomacy. By engaging in activities that raise awareness about the situation, providing support for affected communities, or advocating for peaceful resolutions, students can develop empathy, critical thinking skills, and a sense of global citizenship. During the COVID-19 pandemic, service-learning projects and initiatives were made internationally to support vulnerable populations, distribute essential supplies, promote public health awareness, and contribute to community resilience. These projects teach students about public health, crisis response, and the value of community solidarity while also fostering a sense of responsibility towards their society. With regard to peace and conflict issues, service-learning aligns with the goals of the United Nations by promoting concepts such as conflict resolution, human rights, and sustainable development among international students. Students participated in activities that raised

awareness about the impacts of violence, promoted dialogue and mediation, and worked towards building a culture of peace both locally and globally. Service-learning also plays a crucial role in improving literacy levels by involving students in projects that address educational inequalities and promote reading, culture and writing skills. Students might tutor peers or younger students, create educational materials, or organize literacy-focused events. This can have a direct impact on enhancing literacy rates within communities while fostering a sense of empowerment and leadership among participating students.

Therefore, it could be seen that service-learning approach combines community service with academic instruction in a way that influences both students' academic performance and the communities they serve. It is a method of experiential learning where students engage in real-work activities that address community needs while also reinforcing the concepts and skills they are learning in the classroom. Service-learning is simply a form of experiential education whereby students are engaged in activities that simultaneously address both human and community needs. Likewise, such events provide structured opportunities that are purposely planned to promote both student learning and development (McKinnon, Toms & Evert, 2016; Olagoke-Oladokun et al., 2018). In addition, service-learning also combines community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility. (<http://www.cofc.edu/~servicelearning/facstaff/>) Service-learning is an active and practical approach that encourages students to apply what they learn in the classroom to real-world situations while addressing community needs. The core concept of service-learning is the reciprocal process that is involved: both the participants (usually students) and the community they serve. However, in Nigerian Universities in general and Federal Universities in particular, it seems that service-learning has not been fully integrated into an academic curriculum. Therefore, its' effects on academic performance and environmental development are not significantly felt among students in Nigerian Universities. That is where the problem of this paper lies.

According to Dewey (2004) and Burth (2016), service-learning is regarded as a philosophy and an instructional method. The philosophical point of service-learning is that every form of education should enhance individual development by encouraging students' social responsibility through active citizenship in society. While service-learning as an instructional medium involves integrating service activities into the academic curriculum to solve real community needs while students learn through active engagement and reflection (Burth, 2016; Tyran, 2017). The recorded impact of service-learning cuts across both the giver and the recipient. This very important attribute differentiates service-learning from other forms of experiential learning methods (Knapp, Fisher, & Levesque-Bristol, 2010). Studies proved that service-learning as a form of pedagogy improves students' academic performance as students construct new knowledge from their experiences and the ability to relate their experience with the theoretical knowledge obtained in the classroom through reflection (Brondani, 2012). The Studies show the form of pedagogy to train students to think critically and effectively solve societal challenges such as hunger, poverty, and redundancy, among others (Dugguh, 2018; Gbadamosi, 2018). To this effect, service-learning as an experiential study is gradually taking its roots in the tertiary education system of Nigeria for the effective development of students who can handle next-generation challenges (Deba, Jabor, Buntat, & Musta'mal, 2014). Typically, the students are expected to passively receive and believe the fixed answers presented by the teachers, often without understanding why and how such conclusions were reached (Dugguh, 2013; Schwerdt & Wuppermann, 2011). Service-learning pedagogy has only been recently adopted in a few Nigerian institutions of higher education and a few studies have proven how beneficial the service-learning pedagogy is among participants, especially to students in public universities (Deba, Jabor, Buntat & Musta'mal, 2014; Olagoke-Oladokun, Mokhtar, Gbadamosi & Dugguh, 2020).

## 2. Research Problem

Scholars have argued that service-learning helps to prepare youth for the demands of the workplace by fostering self-esteem, knowledge acquisition, interpersonal skills development, a sense of accomplishment, etc. However, despite its potential benefits to students and the community, service-learning is yet to be extensively taught and researched in many universities in developing countries, including Nigeria. The problem of this paper, therefore, is how service-learning would be integrated into the academic curriculum in Federal Universities in Nigeria.

Therefore, this paper aims to determine the extent to which service-learning influences (affects) the academic performance of students in Federal Universities in Nigeria. Similar studies have been carried out by other researchers, but none has actually addressed the issue of the academic performance of students in Federal Universities in Nigeria. This paper attempts to address the issue and close the gap.

## 3. Review of Related Literature

A synthesis of recent literature highlights the diverse benefits of service-learning in higher education, especially in the USA and other developed countries. These benefits include improved academic outcomes, enhanced critical thinking skills, increased civic engagement, and the cultivation of personal and social responsibility among students (Eyler & Giles, 2019; Gelmon et al., 2018). Service-learning is recognized as a strategy for developing practical skills that are applicable beyond the classroom, such as problem-solving, teamwork, and communication (Marullo & Edwards, 2019). Studies also underscore the positive impact of service-learning on students' motivation and attitudes towards learning (Yorio & Ye, 2018). Nigeria had over 170 tertiary institutions in 2023. There are 122 Universities (43 Federal, 48 State and 31 Private). There are 49 Polytechnics (28 Federal and 21 State). Out of 219 Colleges of Education, 70 are owned by the Federal Government, 149 are owned by states and individuals. Though students' enrollment data is not updated, enrolment into Federal Universities as of 2019 was estimated at 1,206,825 students (<http://statistica.com>statistics>).

Therefore, service-learning can be taught at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in these institutions. In undergraduate courses, service-learning (if effectively implemented) can be used to help students learn course content,

develop critical thinking skills, and apply their knowledge to real-world problems. In graduate courses, service-learning can be useful to them to develop their professional skills and prepare for their careers. The study suggests that service-learning can have a positive impact on students' academic performance: better reflection, higher Graded Point Averages (GPAs), better critical thinking skills and a stronger sense of civic engagement. Nigeria's tertiary education sector is faced with recurrent challenges: overcrowded classrooms, outdated curricula, limited resources and frequent strike actions (Okebukola, 2017). Incorporating innovative pedagogical approaches like service-learning can provide a promising solution to address these issues.

Recent studies (Okebukola, 2020; Daramola, 2021) have highlighted the need to adapt teaching methods to align with global trends and enhance students' overall learning experiences. The study proved that students who engage in service-learning experience constitute the administrative structure of their class as it exposes students to the foretaste of working in an organization. This is attributed to the idea that students who work as a group of individuals play key roles in constructing the content and organizational structure of the class (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2019). Such experiences by the students have ignited a curiosity towards understanding organizational structure. Service-learning has been widely acknowledged for its potential to enhance students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes. According to Eyler & Giles (1999), service-learning fosters critical thinking, communication skills, and personal development. Similarly, Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda & Yee (2000) found that engagement in service activities positively correlates with higher grades and increased retention rates. These findings underscore the potential of service-learning to contribute to students' academic success.

In the Nigerian context, Okpala & Onda (2015) emphasized the role of service-learning in bridging the gap between theory and practice in higher education, cultivating civic responsibility and promoting social change. However, empirical evidence specifically regarding its impact on academic performance in Nigerian universities remains limited. The above-mentioned limitations have the potential that can impact the effectiveness of traditional teaching methods. Okebukola (2007) discussed the need for innovative educational approaches in Nigerian universities to address these limitations/challenges. Bringle, Clayton & Price (2012) suggest that service-learning can be used for effective teaching, learning, research and community service. As a university program, it requires adequate time for effective planning and the execution process. Regrettably, inadequate time for the process was identified as another major constraint in service-learning implementation in Federal Universities. The time factor is an important consideration in service-learning pedagogy as it can be considered standard if it lasts for a considerable duration with intensity, as observed in the Corporation for National and Community Service in 2009. However, the time factor has been considered the most prevalent difficulty as there is usually a collision of planned activities in service-learning projects with other responsibilities in the school among participants. Insufficient time for the preliminary stages of service-learning, such as planning, investigation, and implementation, is usually a pre-condition recorded among service-learning participants. In many instances, researchers found that students recorded insufficient time to accomplish most of the outline activities during the implementation process of service-learning (Kaye, 2010; Kaye, 2013). Another study identified lack of time as the main factor for the refusal to adopt service-learning by faculty members this many faculty members attributed to an additional workload (Palmer & Savoie, 2002). Darby & Newman (2014), in a qualitative study on what motivates students and challenges for service-learning, found transportation and time as major setbacks in service-learning pedagogy.

In separate studies, lack of funds was found to be another major challenge in adopting and implementing service-learning as a form of pedagogy. This challenge was usually encountered by most institutions with no intention to adopt service-learning as a form of pedagogy, thereby leaving the faculty members with no choice but to look for an external source of funds (Al Barwani, Al-Mekhlafi & Nagaratnam, 2013; Fiske, 2002). Aside from the issues of time raised in his studies, Mileusnić (2020) identified the logistical challenges, the interpersonal relationship between team members and the organizations, and the unusual participation of all team members during the project implementation process and in other roles delegated to them. The study also identified difficulty in controlling what students can learn within a given time. This can possibly be due to the constructivist nature of service-learning, where individual student construct their knowledge from their experiences in the field (Mayer, 2009; Young et al., 2015). Student supervision and assessment of all projects by faculty members were also identified as another challenging case in service-learning implementation. This becomes more challenging in cases where there is a big disparity ratio between faculty staff and students (Tryon et al., 2008). Hence, this study is motivated to explore and identify challenges related to service-learning implementation in Nigerian Federal Universities.

#### 4. Conceptual Clarifications

The following concepts: Service-learning, reflection, critical thinking, civic engagement, leadership development, teamwork and students' performance as used in this paper are hereby clarified:

##### 4.1. Service-learning

Service-learning, as stated earlier, is an educational approach that combines learning objectives with community service in order to provide a pragmatic, progressive learning experience while meeting societal needs. Barbara Jacoby defines service-learning as "...a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Service-learning>. Robert (1994) defined service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address community needs while reflecting on the experience to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility."

Eyler & Giles (1999) defined service-learning as "a partnership between a school and a community organization that engages students in meaningful, mutually beneficial community service that is integrated into the students' academic curriculum and that includes structured opportunities for reflection". This definition emphasizes three key components of service-learning: service and learning. While service refers to students engaging in meaningful and purposeful activities that address a community need, learning reflects on students' service experiences to gain new knowledge, skills, and understanding. Kolb (1984), on his part, considers service-learning as a 'learning cycle' that consists of four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Johnson (2009), on his part, says service-learning is "a pedagogy that integrates meaningful community service with academic learning to promote civic responsibility, develop civic skills, and enhance academic achievement."

Other definitions of service-learning include those of Smith (2012), which emphasizes that service-learning is "a form of experiential learning that engages students in meaningful community service that is integrated with their academic coursework and that provides opportunities for reflection on the experience." According to Stoecker (2016), service-learning is "a pedagogy that integrates community-based learning with academic learning to promote civic engagement, social justice, and academic achievement."

#### 4.2. Reflection

Reflection is the major idea behind service-learning. Evertson (2019) defines reflection as "the process of thinking about and learning from an experience." She argues that reflection is essential for making meaning of service-learning experiences and for applying what is learned to other areas of life. Tisdell (2018) identifies three types of reflection in service-learning: descriptive reflection, analytical reflection, and critical reflection. Descriptive reflection involves simply describing what happened during the service-learning experience. Analytical reflection involves analyzing the experience to understand its meaning and significance. Critical reflection involves questioning the assumptions and values underlying the experience. Freed-Rowan (2017) argues that reflection is a 'recursive process' that involves revisiting and re-examining one's experiences over time. She suggests that reflection can be facilitated by using various tools and techniques, such as journaling, group discussions and visual art.

Vallance (2016) opines that reflection is a "transformative process" that can lead to personal and professional growth. She suggests that reflection can help participants develop new skills and knowledge, build relationships with others, and make a positive impact on the community. Cavilla's (2017) study indicates that reflection may affect students' affective levels but not necessarily their cognitive levels. To make reflection useful for students' academic performance, reflection "should be implemented in a well-structured, intentional manner with purposeful fidelity throughout the course of a student's academic career." Larsen, London & Emke's (2016) paper indicates that in reflection processes, learners can exchange perspectives among group members and reevaluate their original perspectives.

Shrader (2015) argues that reflection is a 'powerful tool' that can help participants to "make meaning of their experiences, to learn from their mistakes, and to grow as individuals." She suggests that reflection can be facilitated by providing participants with opportunities to share their experiences with others, to receive feedback, and to develop their own reflective practices. According to Kelly (2014), reflection is "an essential component of service-learning," and it can "help participants to make meaning of their experiences, to develop new skills and knowledge, and to make a positive impact on the community." She suggests that reflection can be facilitated by providing participants with opportunities to reflect on their experiences individually and collectively, to receive feedback from others, and to develop their own reflective practices. Persson, Kvist & Ekelin's (2018) research shows that students may not be honest about their reflections when they adjust them to suit the needs of the instructors. Therefore, the researchers suggested that reflection be used for the purpose of development without assigning credit points so that students feel safe to provide their honest reflection. Other variables are:

#### 4.3. Critical Thinking

There are many views about critical thinking. For instance, Jacoby & Howard (2015) see critical thinking in service-learning as "the ability to analyze and evaluate information and ideas, to identify assumptions, to draw inferences, and to make reasoned judgments," while Kezar & Rhoads (2011) defined critical thinking as "the ability to think clearly and rationally about complex issues, to identify and evaluate assumptions and to make informed decisions."

Mezirow (2000) went a step further to define critical thinking as "a process of examining our own assumptions and beliefs, and the assumptions and beliefs of others, in order to make more informed and responsible decisions." Paul & Elder (2008) and Tobin & McKnight (2005) definitions emphasized "the ability to think clearly and rationally about any issue or problem" and "the ability to think for oneself, to question authority, and to make informed decisions," respectively. Zlotkowski's (1998) definition centers on "the ability to think critically about the issues we face, to identify and evaluate potential solutions, and to take action to make a difference."

#### 4.4. Behavioral Change

Change in behavior is constant. Behavior change encompasses altering habits and behaviors for the long term. It is caused by physical or mental health problems. Behavior change is the practice of changing people's behavior. It is about a real-world change for social and environmental good. Behavior change begins with a realistic understanding of how and why people behave the way they do. Traditionally, efforts to influence the way people behave are often spurred by communications and awareness creation. However, the modern approach to behavior change is acknowledging that knowing what a person should do and doing it are not the same (<https://www.behaviourchange.org.uk>). Factors that may

cause behavior change include people, condition, treatment, relationship, environment, etc. To effect a change in behavior, the following elements should be considered: Assess, advise, agree, assist and arrange.

#### 4.5. Civic Engagement

According to Eyler & Giles (1999), civic engagement is "a form of experiential education in which students participate in activities that address community needs and reflect on the experience in order to gain knowledge, develop skills, and make a difference." To Carolyn & Bringle (1991), is a "civic pedagogy" that can help students to develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary for civic engagement.

Levine (2007) states civic engagement is "the practice of working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and our country." He argues that service-learning can be an effective way to promote civic engagement by providing students with opportunities to learn about and address community problems. Fine's (2004) opinion was that civic engagement can be a powerful tool for social justice if it is designed to challenge students' assumptions about privilege and power and empower them to address inequality.

Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle is a model of learning that emphasizes the importance of active participation in civic engagement and reflection. Service-learning can be seen as a way to implement the experiential learning cycle, as it provides students with opportunities to learn by doing and reflecting on their experiences. Heffernan's (2017) research recommends that service-learning can be used to promote civic engagement by helping students develop a sense of community, civic knowledge, and civic skills.

#### 4.6. Leadership Development

Beaton & DeCoster (2017) emphasized the importance of leadership development in support of service-learning as an effective tool for leadership development that can provide students with opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge necessary to be effective leaders, such as problem-solving, teamwork, and communication. They also found that service-learning can help students develop a sense of civic responsibility and social awareness. Bringle & Hatcher (2011) supported that service-learning is a pedagogy that integrates meaningful community service with academic learning and reflection. They argue that service-learning can be an effective way to develop students' leadership skills because it provides them with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills in real-world contexts, work with others to solve problems and reflect on their experiences.

De Groot, Barkley & Stoecker (2010) found that service-learning can help students develop leadership skills in a number of areas, including communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking. They also found that service-learning can help students develop a sense of civic responsibility and social awareness. Furthermore, Pless, Maak & Stahl (2011) argue that at the international level, service-learning can be an effective way to develop students' leadership skills because it provides them with opportunities to learn about different cultures and to work with people from different backgrounds. They also found that international service-learning can help students develop a sense of global citizenship and responsibility. In terms of course structure, Shea (2015) discussed the benefits of service-learning for leadership development, how to design and implement a service-learning course, and how to assess students' learning. Smith & Shiroma (2016) reviewed the research on the relationship between service-learning and leadership development and found that service-learning can be an effective way to develop students' leadership skills but that more research is needed to understand the specific mechanisms through which this happens.

#### 4.7. Team Work

Dugguh (2019) in Beaubien & Baker (2004) defined teamwork with reference to those behaviors that facilitate effective team-member interaction with a team. To this end, Eyler & Giles (1999) consider teamwork as "the process of working together toward a common goal, using a variety of skills and perspectives, and sharing responsibility for the outcome." They argue that teamwork is essential for successful service-learning because it helps students develop important skills such as communication, conflict resolution, and problem-solving. Jacoby (2003) builds on Eyler and Giles' definition by arguing that teamwork in service-learning should be "collaborative, participatory, and democratic." She emphasizes the importance of students working together with community partners to create a shared vision for the project and to make decisions about how to implement it.

Bringle & Hatcher (2009) described teamwork in service-learning as "a process of collective action in which individuals work together to achieve a common goal." They identify four key elements of teamwork in service-learning: shared goals, interdependence, communication, and conflict resolution. Furco (2009) argues that teamwork in service-learning should be 'relational,' meaning that it should focus on building relationships between students, community partners, and other stakeholders. He also emphasizes the importance of flexibility and adaptability in teamwork, as projects often change and evolve over time. Jacoby & Associates (2010) state that teamwork is "the process of working together with others to achieve a common goal." They identify five key skills that are essential for teamwork in service-learning: communication, collaboration, problem-solving, critical thinking, and leadership. Sigmon (2013) brought in the concept of 'co-constructed' and emphasized that teamwork should be 'co-constructed,' meaning that it should be created and implemented by students and community partners together. He emphasizes the importance of trust, respect, and shared responsibility in 'co-constructed' teamwork.

#### 4.8. Students' Performance

Students' performance, as stated by Reynolds & Walberg (1992), is the product of the interaction of student characteristics: aptitude, motivation, personality and environmental factors: university/school climate, teacher quality and

parental involvement. Narad & Abdullah (2016) assert that student performance is the extent to which a student has acquired knowledge, skills and abilities as a result of instruction. It is typically measured by grades, test scores, and other assessments.

## 5. Methodology

This research utilized a quantitative and explorative design approach. The choice of this methodology stemmed from the essential need to delve into the experiences of Nigerian students who are engaged in service-learning courses. Secondary sources of data collection were used. This method has the benefit of consulting journals and books on service-learning and online material to know from other institutions and students their experiences with service-learning. Throughout the exploratory phase of the study, the data collected from the participants illuminated how service-learning has the potential to cultivate the skills necessary for academic performance. To facilitate this investigation, a number of students were drawn randomly from Federal Universities in Nigeria. The respondents have enough experience in service learning as they have high grades in the course at the GST, 100 Level. Focus groups and Faculty Lecturers were also interviewed with a semi-structured questionnaire. Oral and written responses were collected and analyzed.

## 6. Results

The findings of this study indicate a positive and significant relationship between service-learning pedagogy and students' academic performance. Students who were engaged in service-learning reported higher levels of academic achievement, as evidenced by improved grades, increased course completion rates, higher quality projects and community service. Moreover, quantitative data revealed that service-learning experiences contributed to the development of critical thinking skills, enhanced personal growth, and increased community involvement. This approach ensures that courses remain pertinent, boosting the capacity to both apply and retain knowledge. It also revealed a greater exposure to real-world societal challenges, valuable insights for career growth, and numerous opportunities for continuous learning, awareness creation, peace initiatives, honesty and ethical behaviors, etc.

## 7. Discussion

Commenting on students' academic performance, Yusuf, Onifade & Bello (2016) clarified the outcome of a student's engagement in learning activities. They state that various factors include the student's individual characteristics, the learning environment and the instructional practices and materials used.

Martinez (2007) considers student performance as the product of learning prompted by the teaching activity by the teacher and produced by the student. It is typically measured by grades, test scores, and other assessments. Like Martinez (2007), Willcox (2011) based his argument on the premise of the level of knowledge shown in an area or subject compared to the norm. It is typically measured by grades, test scores, and other assessments. Sharm (2012) taught that student performance is the extent to which a student is able to meet the learning goals set by the teacher or institution. It is typically measured by grades, test scores, and other assessments. To Khan, Iqbal & Tasneem (2015), student performance is the product of the student's effort, ability, and motivation, as well as the quality of instruction and the learning environment. Recently, Adedokun & Adebayo (2022) student performance is the extent to which students have acquired the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in school and beyond. It is typically measured by grades, test scores, and other assessments. Thus, students' performance for this paper is measured in terms of experience, effectiveness, commitment and knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs). The diagram below shows how service-learning exerts its influence on the academic performance of students:

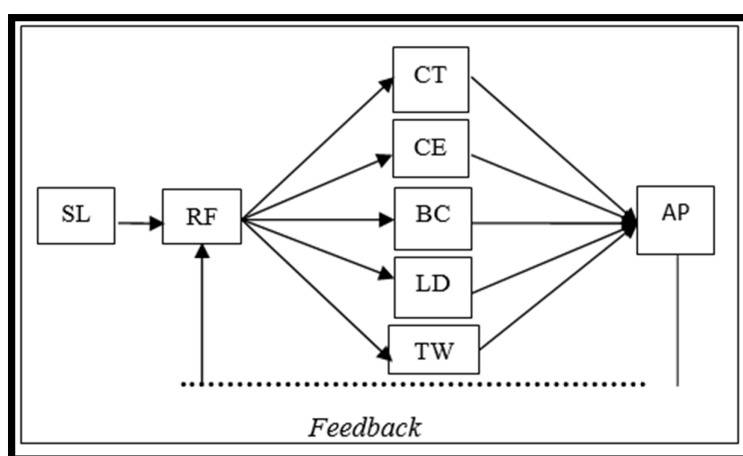


Figure 1: Researcher's Model Showing Service-learning Performance Relationship, (2023)

### Note:

- SL = Service-learning
- RF = Reflection

- CT = Critical Thinking
- CE = Civic Engagement
- BC = Behavioral Change
- LD = Leadership Development
- TW = Team Work
- AP = Academic Performance

In figure 1 above, each variable contributes to students' academic performance. For example, service-learning (independent variable) helps students in reflection (mediating variable), which affects critical thinking skills, civic engagement, behavior change, leadership development and teamwork, which in turn influence students' academic performance (dependent variables).

This model can then be applied to both academic performance and community experiences. Reflection serves as a moderating variable between service-learning and the dependent variables. The model is not meant to be linear or one-dimensional. Rather, it is a complex system of interrelated factors that all contribute to performance. The strength of the relationship between any two factors will vary depending on the specific context. The model can be used to design and be evaluated by understanding the relationship between all the variables.

## 8. Conclusion

Service-learning holds promise as a pedagogical tool to enhance both students' academic performance and their sense of social responsibility, leadership styles, cultural awareness, teamwork, improved university ranking, etc. In addition, the findings from this study emphasize the potential benefits of incorporating service-learning into the curriculum of Nigerian universities, particularly at the Federal University of Kashere. By bridging the gap between classroom learning and community engagement, service-learning can contribute to holistic student development while addressing societal needs. The primary objective of education is to drive change within its recipients. Service-learning has rapidly gained prominence as a pedagogical approach widely embraced by educational institutions worldwide, owing to its multifaceted advantages for participants. When service-learning is implemented effectively, student beneficiaries exhibit better preparation than their counterparts who follow conventional educational methods employed by other tertiary institutions in Nigeria. As a result, service-learning demonstrates superior benefits for participants due to the comprehensive processes inherent in its implementation. It has effectively achieved the fundamental aim of education, impacting all participants involved. Consequently, Federal Universities in Nigeria need to develop courses that hold relevance for students, promote long-term knowledge retention, and cultivate graduates capable of applying acquired knowledge. Furthermore, institutions must train professionally adept individuals committed to identifying and resolving emerging societal challenges through the knowledge, skills and abilities acquired during the service-learning programs. The integration of service-learning as a pedagogical approach to the university curriculum offers significant opportunities for diverse learning experiences.

## 9. Recommendation

Based on the preceding, it is recommended that service-learning be incorporated as a stand-alone program into Federal Universities in Nigeria. Service-learning helps students improve their academic performance by developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills, a sense of civic responsibility, cultural awareness, teamwork, leadership development, volunteerism, improved global citizenship behavior modification and empathy. Incorporating service-learning into Federal Universities' curriculum can help prepare students for success not only in their academic studies but also in their future careers and their community service as well.

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