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## Understanding “Service Learning” in a Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools in Aceh, Indonesia

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## Understanding “Service Learning” in a Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools in Aceh, Indonesia

### Abstract

Traditional Islamic educational institution, known as *Dayah*, has been popular in Aceh for their ability to produce highly qualified Muslim scholars. This popularity was due to its ability to implement a special type of learning strategy known as *beut pubeut* or service learning (SL) in the *Dayah* across Aceh. In spite of the emergence of modern teaching approach, the SL in the *Dayah* is persistent. Therefore, this research aims to discuss the nature of SL and its strengths and investigate the effectiveness of the SL as implemented in the *Dayah*. As this is a qualitative study, the data for this research was collected through observation and interviews. The data were analyzed through qualitative procedures, such as coding techniques, and showed several important findings. First, the SL implemented by the *Dayah* has played an important role in producing charismatic Muslim scholars/*Ulema* in Aceh. Second, the combination of the SL and modern teaching strategies helps develop students’ competence. Third, internal and external support greatly influences the effective implementation of SL. This study suggests that the service learning with some adjustments needs to be maintained as it benefits not only students and *dayah* but the community as well.

### Keywords

service-learning, Dayah, transformation, Muslim scholars, qualitative research, interview, Aceh

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# Understanding “Service Learning” in a Traditional Islamic Boarding Schools in Aceh, Indonesia

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Traditional Islamic educational institution, known as *Dayah*, has been popular in Aceh for their ability to produce highly qualified Muslim scholars. This popularity was due to its ability to implement a special type of learning strategy known as *beut pubeut* or service learning (SL) in the *Dayah* across Aceh. In spite of the emergence of modern teaching approach, the SL in the *Dayah* is persistent. Therefore, this research aims to discuss the nature of SL and its strengths and investigate the effectiveness of the SL as implemented in the *Dayah*. As this is a qualitative study, the data for this research was collected through observation and interviews. The data were analyzed through qualitative procedures, such as coding techniques, and showed several important findings. First, the SL implemented by the *Dayah* has played an important role in producing charismatic Muslim scholars/*Ulema* in Aceh. Second, the combination of the SL and modern teaching strategies helps develop students' competence. Third, internal and external support greatly influences the effective implementation of SL. This study suggests that the service learning with some adjustments needs to be maintained as it benefits not only students and *dayah* but the community as well.

*Keywords:* service-learning, *Dayah*, transformation, Muslim scholars, qualitative research, interview, Aceh

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## Introduction

Service learning (SL) is a kind of the *Dayah* learning model in Aceh which has been known for its effectiveness in producing numerous charismatic Muslim scholars (*ulema*). In spite of the emergence of many modern teaching approaches, where some boarding schools may have lacked interest in implementing the SL (Marhamah 2018), it is persistently adopted in *Dayah* in Aceh, Indonesia. SL is oriented toward service activities offered by mentors during the learning process, allowing students to acquire deeper and better knowledge (Harkins et al., 2018). The SL model has a strategic role in fostering resources of the *Dayah* (Syamsudduha & Tekeng, 2017).

Studies on the use of SL in academic settings have been emerging. Some of these studies examined various issues surrounding the SL. First, many studies have been conducted on issues regarding the effectiveness of the SL in helping students in low-achieving schools improve their academic achievement (Ardani et al., 2016; Abdullah et al., 2016; McLeod, 2017; Nusanti, 2018; Syamsudduha & Tekeng, 2017) and its compatibility on certain lessons that are not classified as scientifically-based subjects (Eckenfels, 2009). Second, there have been studies related to factors leading to the successful implementation of SL (Harkins et al., 2018; Holland, 2002) and also studies related to financial issues for its effective

implementation (Abes et al., 2002). Third, studies have looked at the output of SL and its impact on educational institutions as pointed out in Harkins et al. (2018). Meanwhile, in the service learning discussion, there has not been found any fundamental aspect of SL that leads to character-building in the tradition of typical Islamic boarding-school education.

This article is intended to show that SL has been widely used in *Dayah* around Aceh. This article, therefore, aims at examining how the SL process in the *Dayah* takes place and survives in one of the regions in the province of Aceh. The following three questions are the main issues examined in this study: first, how is the application (practice) of SL in *Dayah* used to produce charismatic scholars? Second, how effective is the SL in achieving the goals in producing future scholars? Third, how is SL maintained in the traditional Islamic boarding schools in Aceh? These three questions are discussed under the context of the traditional Islamic school system that applies in Aceh as a legacy system that has become an important part of the history of the education system in Aceh.

This paper is based on three assumptions: first, SL in *Dayah* around is applied through a service process. The service is considered to be the key to one's involvement in community service. Second, the success of SL in producing charismatic scholars is determined by the continuity of providing service activities to the community. Third, SL in *Dayah* is maintained through the integration of the school with the community around the institution.

## Service Learning

Service learning (SL) is a contemporary approach to education which stands apart from ordinary service activities like community service and volunteering. Harkins et al. (2018) define SL as a complex pedagogical and philosophical instrument involving multiple stakeholders, such as students, schools, university administrators, and those who support students. In essence, service learning incorporates a network of different partners to support the program's many aims. Jones et al. (2018) describe that a more advanced kind of service learning combines traditional service learning programs with participatory action research so that students can engage in service learning while using and improving research skills. This definition exemplifies the core role of service learning as a means of building abilities, particularly leadership, and generating beneficial outcomes for addressing actual community problems (Adewale et al., 2018).

In addition, SL enables students to access the actual world and directly confront societal concerns. By cooperation between educational institutions and the community, SL may be utilized to its advantage. McDonald and Dominguez (2015) outline steps that can be taken to create a good framework for partnership development, such as the identification of objectives and expected outcomes in service learning; the selection of multiple potential community partners who are assumed to benefit from service learning outcomes; and the definition of the program's objectives. Harkins et al. (2018) propose two distinct forms of SL: "critical service learning," which attempts to explore social change by engaging students in the process of dismantling unfair structures, and "conventional service learning," which encourages students to participate in enhancing service programs.

In the implementation of SL, Cushman (2002) highlights the need to consider several import tools and media. These tools may include journaling, participation notes, field notes and field observations gleaned from a literature review, recordings of dialogue, interview transcripts, class discussion transcripts, and field survey data. All of these are necessary to prevent assertions that the information obtained is unidimensional and biased. To measure the impact of service learning, Jones et al. (2018) identified a number of important factors, including interaction with the community through collaboration during the service learning

period, as well as understanding ethics in a dynamic, complex, realistic context and challenging-level problem solving (Okolie et al., 2014).

Communities have witnessed the efficacy of SL as it has the capacity to resolve learning issues. According to Cushman (2002), the continuity of SL can be maintained provided teachers maintain a regular presence and knowledge investment with and for community members. When problems or concerns occur, society can rely on them. It requires considerable time to establish the teachers' dependability in SL implementation (Bahng, 2015). SL also benefits instructors and students, as Woonsun (2013) asserts that SL involvement and service learning needs in education have a good effect on teacher professionalism, self-efficacy, the desire to learn over the long term, and social empowerment. As a result of the numerous benefits that have been demonstrated, SL is essential for increasing the efficacy of participants.

According to Carnicelli and Boluk (2017), the difficulty of service learning comes in its resistance to standard learning models or counter-normative pedagogical approaches, where SL serves as an alternative teaching method to "bring together" communities, students, and teachers. The SL is seen as more effective as it allows critical analysis to emerge (Harkins et al., 2018),

## Methods

This is a qualitative case study conducted at a particular Traditional Islamic School, the MUDI Mesra Boarding School, located in the Province of Aceh, Indonesia. The study on *Dayah* is an intriguing experience for us, since some of the authors are the graduate of similar types of Islamic educational institutions. MUDI Mesra was chosen for three reasons: first, the top leader of the institution is known as the founder of a particular sect in Islam, known as the *Tastafti Tarekat*, and this particular sect has been developed widely in Aceh. Second, the leader of the *Dayah* is one of the most influential charismatic Muslim scholars (*ulema*) in Aceh. Third, *Dayah* MUDI Mesra is one of the oldest educational institutions of this type in Aceh and is persistently progressing, and one the main characteristics of our research site is the one applying SL in instructional process, and this particular *Dayah* has consistently implemented SL in the process of instruction. Data were collected through observation and interviews. Observations were conducted on learning activities at *Dayah* MUDI Mesra from 2018 to February 2019. We also assessed learning facilities such as supporting facilities, infrastructure, wall magazines, and *Dayah* organizational structures, textbooks, and learning materials used. The researchers also observed the learning process at the *Bale Beut* (typical classroom at *Dayah*), students' daily activities, including activities outside of class hours, such as worship activities and students' interactions within the community adjacent to the *Dayah*. The observation was conducted for two hours daily during the instructional process within the institution. The fieldnotes were done concurrently while we were observing the activities. We took full notes on every detail of the activities that took place in the *Dayah*.

The interviews were conducted with the *Dayah* management; a director and deputy director of the *Dayah*; two teachers were also invited for interviews; two alumnae of the *Dayah* as well (these alumnae are studying at higher Islamic Institute of Al-Aziziyah MUDI); and two community leaders were later on interviewed to add more nuances to our findings. The two teachers invited have served in the *Dayah* for more than 16 years. Some of the key questions discussed included (1) general understanding on learning model applied by *Dayah* MUDI Mesra; (2) the effectiveness of the SL model and its implementation procedures; and (3) the efforts made to preserve and revitalize the SL model.

The observation fieldnotes and interview data were then analyzed through coding. We referred to the coding techniques as advised by Silverman (2020) suggesting three kinds of coding techniques used in qualitative data analysis: open, axial, and selective coding.

Open coding is the first step taken in our data analysis and is frequently employed as the first step of qualitative data analysis. At this time, we began collecting qualitative data such as observation data and interview transcriptions. Using open coding, we separated our data into discrete chunks and labeled them with "codes." As implied by its name, open-coding is intended to open up new theoretical possibilities, as we initially engaged with qualitative data. The objective of segmenting and labeling our data is to enable us, as researchers, to continuously compare and contrast events with comparable characteristics. In this manner, we gathered all data (such as quotations) that were marked with a certain code. This procedure encourages us to abandon our preconceptions and previous beliefs regarding our own study.

Axial coding is the second step in the coding process, following open coding. In contrast to open coding, where material was divided into discrete portions, axial coding involves establishing linkages between codes. Using axial coding, we arranged the open coding codes we have written. In doing so, we examined our codes and the underlying data to determine how they can be categorized. We built a category based on an existing code, and then developed a new, more abstract category that incorporates multiple codes.

Following axial coding, we had a number of categories backed by a set of streamlined supporting codes. As the final phase in data analysis, we employed selective coding to connect all of our categories to a central category. We formulated a unified theory based on our study. Selective coding occurred later in our research, in which we connected categories that we have derived from our qualitative data in prior coding cycles, such as axial coding. The objective of selective coding, which represents the conclusion of the qualitative research procedure, is to either develop a new theory or alter an existing theory depending on our research.

## Findings

For the purpose of readability, the results of fieldwork were organized following research inquiries: practices of service learning; effectiveness of the SL; and the continuity of the SL. The data were then presented through coding for each of the inquiries.

### Service Learning Practices in Traditional *Dayah* in Aceh

#### The Combination: Modern and Traditional Methods

Teaching approaches in MUDI Mesra were the combination between the service learning or *beut pubeut* and the "so-called" modern teaching methods. Three most widely used teaching methods in traditional Islamic school are as follows: first, lecturing, which is a one-way communication where the teacher read and explain subject matter out of the books, while students are listening; this method, however, is used at the initial level (beginner). Our interviews with one of the teachers suggest that lecturing technique, while mainly carried out by teachers, has now been transformed through the insertion of the "so called" modern teaching method. In the present times, the teachers are not fully engaged with the lecturing technique themselves, but rather share their lecturing roles with teaching assistants-recruited from senior students, those in years eleven and twelve. One of the participants, ML, for example asserted:

Service learning, in this case the lecturing technique is the service, which is only carried out by *tengku*, however, the 7th and 6th grade (level) students of *dayah* who have completed reading and training certain books were invited to engage in service-learning activities, the lecturing (Interview, 10 February 2019, in Samalanga Bereun).

Our participant suggests transformation of service learning-the lecturing. In the past, in most *Dayah*, including the Mudi Mesra implemented sole lecturing technique as the form of *buet-pubeut* or service learning, in which only teachers are allowed to engage in lecturing, while current practices in the *Dayah*, teachers share their roles in lecturing with teaching assistant-their senior students.

The second service learning implemented in the *Dayah* was *Muzakarah* (exchanging views or opinions), which promotes discussion to promote students' critical thinking. The *muzakarah* is an instructional method where two groups of students are formed – a pros and a cons group – and then the students start expressing and exchange ideas on a theme that has been prepared. The debate is accompanied by one or two *tengku* who act as judges. We interviewed the top leader of the *Dayah* MUDI Mesra stating that:

To prepare the students' knowledge and their independence before going into community service, the students need to improve problem-solving skills through learning activities such as debate.

This kind of service learning has been consistently implemented in the *Dayah*, and this suggests that SL in the form of exchanges of ideas are a common practice in the *Dayah* in the recent times. This fact also indicates that to some extent, certain types of SL is in fact resemble modern teaching method.

The third instructional method used is *resitasi* (recitation), in which learning takes place in the wake of students' activeness. The recitation technique begins with assigning assignments to the students which will be then discussed the next meeting. This model emphasizes problem-solving through discussion between the *santri* (students) and the teachers. In some instances, debates and changes ideas between students and teachers. If they are not satisfied with the answers, they will have to find the agreed answers in various books and *tengku bale* (classroom teacher).

### **Maintaining Dayah Identity**

The Service Learning or *Beut Pubeut* is the *Dayah's* identity, and for the people of Aceh, its existence must be maintained. *Dayah*, in its history, not only functioned as a place to gain knowledge, but also as a place to formulate various plans to fight the invaders. In the contemporary time, *Dayah* is still seen as crucial for the people of Aceh, and therefore, this identity must be preserved. For this reason, it is believed that SL within the *Dayah* is still preserved because of several factors. Regarding the existence of the *Dayah*, the top management of the *Dayah* has the following opinion:

The key for our survival is because we help each other. By helping others, we will always be rewarded with kindness, especially in terms of helping the Islamic institution, and I believe all good deeds will return to us. (Interview, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019, in Samalanga-Bireuen).

The quote suggests that religious motivation is a triggering factor leading to the preservation of the SL within the *Dayah*.

In addition, one of the teachers at *Dayah* MUDI Mesra also shared the same belief on the importance of maintaining the SL in *Dayah* because it has a strategic function in maintaining Islamic law. He said:

The *Beut Peubut* (SL) is important as a means of reviving the message of Islam, especially for the *dayah* community. After graduating, for some students if they are not "*peubut (service)*," it seems that something is missing. (Interview 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019, in Samalanga-Bireuen).

The teacher interviewed also believes that *Dayah* is not only a place for self-development and scientific learning but also a place for self-serenity. He stated that, "We believe that *Beut Pubuet* helps to provide a better life and SL is beneficial as it helps us to develop our knowledge and insights" (Interview, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019, in Samalanga-Bireuen).

The reason for maintaining the SL method in *Dayah* was also stated by one of the students. MA, the *Dayah* MUDI Mesra student, said that SL was an effective way to gain knowledge and experience. He said that:

In my opinion, SL is the most effective way to practice religious knowledge; this method is easy to teach and accepted by the community. ... SL also has the advantage as it can shape people's character to the level that has been reached by previous charismatic scholars or even better (interview, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019 in Samalanga-Bireuen).

Meanwhile, the idealism of the SL model is based on the *Panca Jiwa Ruhul Ma'had* which includes sincerity, simplicity, independence, *ukhwah Islamiyah* (Islamic brotherhood), and freedom. The spirit of helping in kindness is part of the SL (service learning) as well. Abi MUDI said:

The key to success in life is helping others. When we keep the teachings of Islam and help others, Allah will help us for sure (Interview, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019, in Samalanga-Bireuen).

The same opinion was also expressed by Tengku ML. The SL at MUDI *Dayah* is based on the spirit that "every good thing done in the world will be rewarded with kindness in the hereafter and in the world."

### Religious Motivation

There are several considerations regarding the application of SL. First, there are religious considerations, as the application of SL emerges because of religious teaching and traditional principles. These orders are used as the basis for maintaining the SL method and acted as the characteristics of the *Dayah*. Concerning this issue, the top management of the *Dayah* said that "every good deed returns to oneself" (Interview, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019, in Samalanga-Bireuen). The top management also added:

All details of SL activities are written in the books as encouragement to act kindly to others...Service learning has historically been a hereditary activity that has been carried out in *dayah* as a contribution to society (Interviewed, 10 February 2019, in Samalanga-Bireuen).

The top management also acknowledges that there are other interests on the application of this SL, such as efforts to remove the exclusive stigma of *tengku dayah*, especially when they return to their hometowns, as he mentioned that "the Service learning is a kind of training aims at

eliminating the exclusive stigma of *tengku dayah*” (Interviewed on the 10<sup>th</sup> of February 2019 in Samalanga-Bireuen).

In addition to the two considerations above, benefits and needs of the community for SL are also given great attention. Therefore, those benefits are experienced by both community and *Dayah*. This was admitted by one of the students, MA:

I have taken a lot of benefits from this SL. First, I became a better person and a role model for my family and my community. Second, sending me to the *dayah* has helps my parents become more graceful and blessed (Interviewed, 10<sup>th</sup> February 2019, in Samalanga-Bireuen).

Three issues were revealed that address the first research question – combination of traditional and modern teaching approaches – the teaching process as found in the data was lecturing, discussion, and recitation. Our second finding was in regard with the maintenance of the *Dayah* identity, and we also found that the implementation of SL is driven by religious motivation.

## The Effectiveness of Service Learning

### Students' Empowerment

Service Learning is an experimental learning model that helps students to hone their knowledge. The transition from the classroom to experimental learning is an important part of comprehensive learning. Service learning is the highest level of learning at the MUDI Mesra. It has provided significant benefits to the designed learning output. Based on the information from the participants, the practice of service learning applied as a learning model in grades six and seven has been empirically proven effective. In their statement, both the top management and the teacher explained that service learning has a significant impact on the development of students' soft skills and leadership skills.

Our observation and interview reveal the effectiveness of SL and our finding is further confirmed by the teacher and the alumni as well.

*First*, as classroom learning most of time provides theoretical perspective, the practice of SL allows teachers to deliver what is needed by students that match with skills of the workforces. In addition, the SL helps the *Dayah* to organize learning materials that develop students' soft and leadership skill required in the modern workforces and benefit the communities. The teacher participating in this study uttered that “Personally, I had enormous benefits for my scientific growth. Now I am one of the teachers who have become a point of reference for service learning students.”

*Second*, service learning activities can also significantly enhance students' soft skills, particularly their communication and socialization skills. Numerous prominent contemporary Muslim preachers are *Dayah* graduates. Those renowned *dai's* (preachers) abilities are also honed through the service learning technique. The top management of *Dayah* Mudi also corroborated this fact, stating that many of the renowned preachers and professors of *Majlis Ta'lim* (learning group) in Aceh are the alumni of *Dayah* MUDI. Their success is due to their dedication in giving service learning opportunities.

*Third*, community service learning is beneficial for fostering leadership qualities in students. Service learning has been shown to not only empower students to lead themselves, but also to empower them to lead others. For instance, majlis ta'lim began in locations where the service learning paradigm was provided, and certain majlis ta'lim grew into larger communities. Furthermore, several santri (students) have been entrusted with the roles of imam

(prayer leader) and khatib (Friday prayer preacher) in meunasah (a place for praying). The teacher also shared the same view, in his statement, he said:

Service learning as a forum for me (and other students) to practice the knowledge we have and test our intelligence in explaining the Islamic understanding or knowledge to the public. This learning model help me to improve my personal leadership skills (Interviewed 11 February 2019 in Samalanga).

### **Benefits of Service Learning**

Our findings gained from interviews and the participant observations reveal that Service Learning is still persistently used at the *Dayah* for several important reasons.

#### **Empowering the Community**

*Dayah* MUDI Mesra is situated in the center of a residential area, which provides immediate benefits to the neighboring community. According to one of the teachers, residents receive both direct and indirect benefits from *Dayah*. Indirectly, the surrounding environment is becoming more religious, and the community's children can attend the *Dayah* to study. SL has also resolved numerous social and religious issues that have arisen in society.

Students resolve a number of issues during SL, including: (1) students are involved in social concerns such as the celebration of religious holidays, both as committee members and as preachers. In addition, students participate in all social activities organized by the *Dayah* or the community; and (2) Students typically participate in all religious activities, including *tahjiz mayyit* (handling the dead), becoming khatibs-the Friday preacher, managing *majliz ta'lim* (study group), and becoming *imams* (religious leader) in certain villages.

#### **Develop Networks with Various Parties**

The SL develops networks with a variety of parties that are beneficial to neighboring areas. According to *Dayah* Mudi's top management, support for the implementation of service learning comes from both internal and external sources. First, internal *Dayah's* support, which comes from the management of the *Dayah*, the *Dayah* MUDI Mesra foundation, and the internal *Dayah's* community. Abu Mudi, as the top management of MUDI Mesra, has issued policies that strongly favor service learning. Some of the regulations include advising partner traditional Islamic boarding schools to welcome grade six and grade seven students to participate in service learning at these affiliated boarding schools and offering opportunities for exceptional students to teach on occasion on behalf of classroom teachers. Our observation confirms this fact that in some classes, students from grades six and seven were found to act as the substitute teachers in some classes. These students teach various subjects, especially related to their expertise.

In addition, the support to the *Dayah* community (council of teachers and students) encourages this activity by upholding service learning as a tradition. Moreover, the existence of *Dayah* MUDI Mesra, which has offered numerous benefits to the community, is welcomed by a variety of groups. By granting permission to establish the Al-Aziziyah Islamic College, for instance, the Ministry of Religious Affairs has demonstrated its support. The top management also mentioned that "the service learning implemented in the *Dayah* has developed many networks, and the network not only benefit the *Dayah* but also the surrounding community" Support from the *Dayah* Agency and universities in the development of the *Dayah*

curriculum and human resources also contributed to the optimization of the *Beut Peubut* or service-learning technique. In addition, the community as beneficiaries contributed in numerous ways to the establishment of the boarding school.

### **Sustaining the Local Tradition**

The similar view of culture and traditions developed by *Dayah* MUDI Mesra is also a factor affecting its existence up to now. *Dayah* MUDI Mesra adheres to the *Shafii* school of thought, and it helps *Dayah* grow together with the surrounding community because they share the same understanding of *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) and Islam in general. Moreover, *Dayah* has a long history and is deeply rooted in society, not just in the social, but also cultural and religious life, and it has had a positive impact on the Islamic traditional boarding school. This also facilitates the *Dayah* to expand its institution and spread Islamic teachings through service learning activities and avoid the impression of the exclusivity of the *Dayah* community at the same time. The top management and the alumni of the *Dayah* reiterate that *Dayah* and the Service Learning as promoted by the *Dayah* exist up to this present time for the following reasons:

Dayah MUDI Mesra and SL as the main instructional method used in *dayah* still existed because it shares the equal value with the culture and traditions of the community. Even further, *dayah* is also able provide added value to the culture and traditions that are growing in today's society (Interviewed Abi Mudi, 10 of February 2019 in Samalangan-Bireuen).

Furthermore, to add more comprehensive perspective of the Service Learning used on the *Dayah*, we later on revisit the research site to gain information from community leaders living adjacent to the *Dayah*. We identified from our interviews that surrounding communities have taken so much benefit from the *Dayah* and the SL learning implemented in the *Dayah*. One of the community leaders suggests that:

We feel blessed living near the *dayah*. This is because the students engage in service learning, from which we gain a lot of benefit. For example, the students of the *dayah* participated in activities run in the community; they also engage in community service as a part of their service learning (A community leader, interviewed in 2023 in Samalanga, Bireun).

The management and the community leaders both agree that the *Dayah* and the SL implemented in the *Dayah* persist, since the *Dayah* and the SL correspond to the need of the community. On the one hand, the *Dayah* requires students to engage in the community via service learning, and on the other, communities in general are in need of the service given by the students.

## **Discussion**

### ***Service Learning Practices to Produce a Charismatic Ulema***

The data from *Dayah* MUDI Mesra has proven that *Beut Peubut*, a learning model that combines traditional and modern Islamic learning, produces graduates who meet the educational goals. This combination has a significant impact on increasing the students' abilities, which include discipline, knowledge, and independence. This is similar to Jones et al. (2018) who explained that the higher level of service learning is a combination of traditional

service learning programs and participatory action research. Harkins et al. (2018) divides service learning into two: critical service learning and traditional service learning, which both encourage students to take part in service improvement programs. This method is believed to be effective in delivering learning material and opening discussion between students and teachers to solve problems encountered in the community during service learning. To achieve service learning success involves various planning activities, especially for the critical approach, as explained by Mitchell (Bahng, 2015), a collaborative learning activity that is based on relationships and participation of the community helps critical thinking of students.

Students in *Dayah* MUDI Mesra believe that service learning is the best way to actualize theories in real life. According to them, the compatibility of theory and reality can be measured through transformation and feedback from the society. In addition, service learning provides an opportunity for students to objectively reflect on their abilities and knowledge. Harkins et al. (2018) describe service learning as a pedagogical and philosophical tool to support student learning and community development which, according to Chong (2014), also contributes to strengthening and changes on both sides. Students and teachers at MUDI Mesra believe that *beut pubuet* is a collaboration space for students and the community to respond and solve problems. Therefore, the mutual roles of both parties serve as a benchmark for evaluation and development. Ideally, service learning can integrate academic activities and community services to develop leadership, knowledge, and academic performance of the students (Simonet, 2008).

The results indicate that service learning persists because it is compatible with societal demands: it satisfies reciprocal needs, as students require learning spaces and communities require students who can assist with religious instruction. Syamsudduha and Tekeng (2018) say service learning is a means to promote learning and scientific growth through community service. Considering the scientific growth of students, *Dayah* MUDI Mesra has applied the model successfully with a satisfying outcome. It has a favorable effect on the advancement of *Dayah*. The implementation of service learning occurs for at least three reasons: first, for religious reasons to serve the community, one of the life goals provided by religion being the promotion of social harmony. The second is political interest, which is the elimination of ambiguous attitudes regarding the role of institutions in the surrounding environment; hence, service learning is a successful method since the community can directly observe the results. Thirdly, service learning is capable of resolving social issues in the society. Kronick and Cunningham (2013) reached the conclusion that society-rooted social problems can be handled through the provision of suitable services. The highest level of cognitive ability is problem-solving capacity. Gordon (2018) emphasizes that experience is the best way to learn, and that experience occurs when one actually performs.

### ***Effectiveness of Service Learning in Producing Qualified Graduates***

The research data on *Dayah* MUDI Mesra show that service learning is designed to provide an opportunity for students to develop their potential, affective, cognitive, Psychomotoric skill. In other words, a graduate's competence is a major element in the service learning model. Cushman (2002) explained that service learning is a systematic tool to optimize individual abilities through direct interaction with society. Similar to the service learning concept in general, the service learning at *Dayah* MUDI Mesra is directed to develop knowledge, personal, and leadership skills as part of individual growth. Jones et al. (2018) underlined that to achieve these competencies, it is important for students to interact with the community. In line with the above statement, the practice of service learning at *Dayah* MUDI Mesra encourages direct interaction with the community. The relationship between students and the community is established through activities such as guidance for *majliz ta'lim* (study

group), Friday *khutbah* (sermons), community social activities, and the organizer of *Fardhu Kifayah* (handling the dead).

Service learning is an experience-based learning model, which offers real learning experiences through direct interaction with the community. The strength of service learning lies in the process of contextualizing theories learned in the classroom into the actual context. The process of contextualization requires students to understand the socio-culture of the community they serve.

The findings suggest that *beut peubut* was impressively able to develop students' abilities, especially from a scientific perspective. This scientific development occurs through various *beut peubut* service activities. According to the participants, the development of knowledge significantly improved during *majlis ta'lim* and other social activities within the community. This happens because the two activities provide a space for discussion between all involved parties. This is also confirmed by Ardani et al. (2016); McLeod (2017); Nusanti (2018); and Syamsudduha & Tekeng, (2017), who stated that service learning practices are useful for developing student knowledge through the actualization process.

The data also reveal that service learning or *beut peubut* can improve students' skills, especially soft skills. The direct interaction between the students and the community has a positive impact on improving social and communication skills. In line with this, Ondaatje and Zacaras, as cited by Abes et al. (2002), stated that the ratio of service delivery to the community also affects the students' ability to interact and communicate. Furthermore, according to the source, service learning activity also leads to better leadership skills. Basically, the service learning is students' idea where it takes place in a certain area that they are responsible for. It shapes the responsibility and the basis for leadership as well. Hatcher (1996) said that service learning improves the pedagogy and has an impact on leadership.

The service learning practice does not require specialization in certain skills such as internships. The implementation of service learning is also flexible in time. Service learning tends to be classified as a social practice that deepens the students' understanding of learning content through contextual experiences within the society and reflecting on these experiences for self-development. Service learning is oriented towards service activities in learning that allow students to gain deeper knowledge (Harkins et al., 2018). At a higher level, service learning in Islamic traditional school can be carried out throughout lifetime and is not limited by the status of the students or *tengku*. In fact, the *beut peubut* is not related to the rewards gain by the students doing the service learning. Furthermore, the uniqueness of *beut peubut* model is that, for the students, the more they do good to the *Dayah* (also to *Abu* or *Tengku*) and society, the more Allah will be pleased with him and the blessings in their life will continue.

### ***The Quality Improvement of Internal and External Party***

The success of service learning is also influenced by two factors: internal and external. Internal factors include the support from the organizers. Service learning requires the involvement of many parties to optimize its output (Gordon, 2018; Harkins et al., 2018; Holland, 2002). Therefore, the continuity and commitment of the organizers affect the final results of service learning practices, whereas the external factor includes partnerships. In service learning, having the right partner is vital in order to achieve the successful objectives and processes. McDonald and Dominguez (2015) stated that developing partnerships and selecting several potential partners were the supporting factors for success. At *Dayah MUDI Mesra*, the strong support from *Dayahs* leaders and management in preserving this *beut peubut* has helped to produce many charismatic *ulemas*. Therefore, the support of various parties, both internal and external, plays an extremely important role in determining the success of service learning.

Furthermore, methods are also very important to support the application of service learning in a learning process. The organizers, such as educational institutions that carry out service learning, support the application of service learning by integrating service learning in the curriculum, formulating pro-service-learning policies, and forging partnerships with potential stakeholders. Chong (2014) and Holland (2002) explained that careful planning is greatly determining the success and good partnership between the parties involved. A well-planned policy is also one of the keys to the successful implementation of service learning (Steinberg et al., 2010). *Dayah* MUDI Mesra has proven this with the pro-service-learning policy that has become the most important success factor for service learning.

The positive impact is experienced by all parties involved, especially students. Moreover, the potential to run a joint program among stakeholders is an important motive in maintaining a successful service learning at *Dayah* MUDI Mesra. Abes et al. (2002) explained that service learning helps improving student knowledge, increasing individual abilities, creating social sensitivity, providing benefits to society, and establishing a mutual relationship between the two parties. *Dayah* MUDI Mesra has proven this, where service learning can improve the abilities of students, society, and increase public trust toward *Dayah*. Thus, the position of the *Dayah* as an educational institution that produces Muslim charismatic scholars is getting stronger. Benson and Harkavy (2012), Brabeck and Latta (2010), and Kronick and Cunningham (2013) agree that a strong relationship between schools and communities can be built through a well-managed and local value-based service learning.

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