

**A STUDY OF SECONDARY SCHOOL  
STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS  
OF AND SATISFACTION WITH SERVICE  
LEARNING ACTIVITIES AT RUAMRUDEE  
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL IN THAILAND**

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**Abstract:** This study was conducted mainly to examine a service-learning program at RIS by determining students' and teachers' perception of the linkage and satisfaction with service learning activities and classroom learning experiences done at RIS. The sample included 254 secondary students and 52 teachers from Ruamrudee International School. This research found differences in students' and teachers' perceptions of service learning activities and satisfaction of learning experience statistically significant. Teachers gave a high rating to perceptions and satisfaction than students. A number of suggestions were given by students showing how important that service learning has been in strengthening and enhancing their education. Service Learning has served to enhance the process of making connections with learning in classroom and bringing to life through the experiences of serving and learning. In conclusion, the researcher suggests when constructing service learning activities, consider the needs of students, and elicit the support of teachers and the community partners. It is crucial to have the whole community join force and working together to bring out what is best for all.

**Keywords:** Service Learning, Perceptions, Satisfaction, Community Service, Ruamrudee International School

**Introduction**

Learning is a process, not yet a finished product. Therefore, learning is a continuation according to Dewey (1978). Service learning (SL) is a research based teaching strategy. It is defined by linking service to learning objectives, through engaging students in the process of planning and implementing the service activities, completing meaningful service work, and integrating reflection and evaluation into the project (Kaye, 2010).

Education continues to improve because of the in-depth research that is available. Through the new 21<sup>st</sup> century technologies education has opened up to embrace fresh and innovative ideas to help develop a balanced instructional learning environment for the

whole child (Kaye, 2010). The teaching/learning paradigm has shifted from the traditional objective, passive, teacher-centered learning model to one that is active, meaningful, and child-centered. Service learning pedagogy fits the new model because it is regarded as an academic learning process intertwined with practical learning experiences found in real life problems, and outcome-based solutions that are attained through projects (Kaye, 2010). It also promotes character development through authentic experiences. Many universities in the world today include this component as part of their practical educational training programs. This concept is widespread and most popular in western countries, not only in institutions of higher learning, but also in K-12 curricula in the United States, many European countries and Japan. Many research studies have provided evidence that this is a highly effective educational tool applicable for all ages and levels (Excel Youth Zone, 2012).

Service learning curriculum components in an international school not only help to develop Dewey's "*perfect community*" (Giles & Eyler, 1994, p. 81) within a multicultural context but also contributes to developing connections within a caring community. This is extended to encompass a larger community that students will interactively encounter after they graduate from universities all over the world. Students will learn and experience new ways in which they can make our world a better place to live.

A large percentage of the research conducted in service learning has taken place in the United States because of SL's popularity there, support from government funding, and widespread implementation (Serve and Learn America, 2012). On the other hand, limited research has been done in other continents including Asia countries. Many international schools have been adopting and implementing service learning in academic courses, but few have published research (Kaye, 2011).

International schools are comprised of students from differing backgrounds, languages, countries, and cultures. This is the perfect opportunity to promote service learning practices and engage in multicultural acceptance and understanding in accordance with RIS School's mission statement. Ruamrudee International School (RIS) is the site chosen for this research project. This school has a rich history, beginning in 1957 in Bangkok, Thailand. It is one of the oldest and continuously growing international schools in Thailand. In addition, RIS is known for its' many

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