LETTERS:

Sulam, or Service Learning Malaysia-University for Society, which focuses on experiential and transformational learning, has been introduced officially in all public universities starting from 2019.

What is Sulam? Many would think that Sulam is an art of weaving known for many centuries in different parts of the world. Yes, Sulam here is a form of weaving, but of human beings. It is the weaving of university students with society and community for a good cause.

Sulam is an innovative teaching and learning strategy or pedagogy as known in the educational field that integrates meaningful, structured and graded community service. It has a specific learning outcome, reflection and student empowerment to deepen learning experience, develop civic responsibility, as well as transform communities through activities that university students perform in the real world.

Since the community is the nucleus of the existence of schools and universities, it is essential for students to utilise education that they receive in the community. It is
more meaningful for university students who will soon join the workforce, and Sulam provides them the opportunity to maximise education received in the lecture rooms to be applied in society.

Using the knowledge, skills and a positive outlook to utilise those for the upliftment of society, students would be able to solve communal issues. For example, a group of early childhood course students reaches out to a children's home, educating the children there on creative arts, drama and instilling personal-hygiene skills among the children.

The children in the home gain all the knowledge and skills provided by the group of undergraduates, who, at the same time, learn how to utilise the knowledge learnt in their course and programme.

They fulfil their Sulam requirement, gain the appropriate grades, and, most importantly, they get the confidence and satisfaction of bettering society.

With the rapidly growing influence of artificial intelligence in Malaysia and around the globe, and the increase in self-learning resources, the role of 21st-century education is rapidly evolving. To a certain degree, it is not "what you know", but "what you can do" with what you know.

Many would wonder and decide that they had been doing many forms of experiential learning in their university life such as voluntary work, community service or communal projects, and Sulam is nothing new.

Yes, Sulam does have the elements of those mentioned above, but Sulam is official, formal, structured, organised, grade-involving and has elements of reflection and empowerment within the structure.

It is essential for every university lecturer to understand the novelty of Sulam and use it as a platform to disseminate deep learning philosophy.

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