



EMERALD POINTS

THE MULTILEVEL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MODEL

School, Community, Workplace
Engagement and Service-Learning

MUHAMMAD HASSAN RAZA



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Engagement and Service-Learning

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

I dedicate my book to my family which is as follows:¹

Zeenat Raza (My wife)
Hussain Raza (My older son)
Rasti Raza (My daughter)
Ali Raza (My younger son)

¹For additional information, resources, and questions about the book, please contact the author at twosoulsonereflexion@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

This book provides students, instructors, researchers, practitioners, administrators, government, and nongovernment organizations with the specific guidelines to use The Multilevel Community Engagement Model as a conceptual framework and systematically develop, implement, and evaluate programs on any topics, effectively work with all groups of the population, and carried out these programs in various settings, such as school, community, and workplace in societies around the world.

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THE BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE BOOK

The objective of this chapter is to present the purpose of this book. It provides information on the Multilevel Community Engagement Model (MCEM) and how it can be used to systematically develop, implement, and assess programs in societies around the world. It also presents a rationale and significance of using the MCEM framework in promoting service-learning (SL) and community engagement.

THE BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK

This book provides a paradigm shift for SL and community engagement in school, community, and workplace engagement by offering a crucial balance between rigor (scientific and systematic procedures) and relevance (real-life experience of program stakeholders) in the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating programs. This book provides its target audiences (e.g. students, instructors, administrators, researchers, practitioners, government personnel, nongovernment organizations, community leaders, employers, donor agencies) with a step-by-step guide to use the MCEM as a conceptual framework and systematically develop, implement, and evaluate the MCEM programs in various settings, such as classrooms, school settings, university campuses, local communities, and workplaces, to achieve various short- and long-term goals and objectives. Although the book provides step-by-step guidelines and systematic process to learners, it also facilitates and supports the choices and decisions that learners make to develop, implement, and evaluate their program. Thus, it empowers learners but simultaneously

facilitates them and program stakeholders to consider and maintain a certain degree of scientific rigor to ensure the accuracy, transparency, and trustworthiness of their program.

Each chapter focuses on a specific step/phase that learners can take to carry out a successful program process. Each chapter is connected and interrelated with the other to guide a systematic process of program development, implementation, and evaluation. The author provided all specific definitions in each chapter, which are explained with examples and additional details. Each chapter has a case study, which provides learners with insightful information and substantial opportunities to relate and apply the knowledge they learn from the chapter to solve real-world problems presented in the case study and successfully accomplish a step/phase of their program. At the end of each chapter, specific assignments associated with each topic which learners can complete to foster their understanding of the contents and grow knowledge and skills in developing, implementing, and evaluating the MCEM programs. Additionally, discussion questions are also provided to facilitate in-depth discussions about the topic among learners and program stakeholders. Due to its self-explanatory quality, this book does not require learners (the audience) to have any specialized knowledge or prior experience of SL and community engagement in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs for their SL projects.

Through each chapter, learners gain an extensive understanding of the MCEM framework and learn its use to systematically develop, implement, and evaluate their MCEM programs. The MCEM framework is broader enough that can be used in many disciplines, such as family science and human development, community and social psychology, sociology, social work, education, anthropology, counseling, medicine, health services, business, hospitality, STEM, etc. The advantage of the MCEM framework is that learners can use it to develop a program on almost any topic or issue, work in any settings, and with any group of the population by carrying out an inclusive and engaged process among all program stakeholders in any country, society, and community, which provides appropriate support, infrastructure, and caring environment for the MCEM programs. Although the MCEM framework is broad enough that can be used and applied to diverse communities and societies globally, due to its effective operationalization, learners can easily use the MCEM framework to develop and implement their programs. Similarly, the MCEM framework also informs a rigorous, continuous, and multilevel assessment to assess various aspects and elements of a program throughout the program process. There are numerous examples of topics provided in this book that learners can choose from to develop their programs.

A few examples of the MCEM programs, which have been successfully developed, implemented, and evaluated by learners in the past are money and happiness, Infidelity, cultural awareness, divorce and breakups, interracial relationships, stepfamilies, promoting gender equality in classrooms, making classrooms inclusive, mass violence, child abuse and neglect, types of listening, workplace communication, personality traits and communication, promoting diversity literature in early childhood classrooms, etc.

Instructors can use this book in their classrooms who aim at providing their students with real-life and applied experiences through community engagement and SL. Students can use this book to self-direct themselves in developing, implementing, and evaluating their programs. When students use this book as a guide in their classroom, they may need fewer guidance and directions from the instructor because this book is self-explanatory and a step-by-step guide for students to complete the development, implementation, and evaluation of their programs. The MCEM programs are not only taught and developed in regular courses including online, seated, and hybrid, thesis and dissertation students can also choose them as an option than doing a research study and develop, implement, and evaluate a MCEM program. Due to the adaptability, flexibility, and effective operationalization of the MCEM framework, the MCEM program can be quite complex, long-term, and extensive, and they can also be quite simple, brief, and short-term.

This book and the MCEM program process facilitate and promote continuous, critical, and engaged conversation among learners and program stakeholders throughout the program life cycle. Learners' reflections are also essential at every step of the program to ensure the transparency and trustworthiness of the program. Hence, instructors can determine the extent and nature of direction, discussion, and engagement among students in their classrooms based on the time, scope, requirements, and purpose of student SL projects. Additionally, practitioners, government, and nongovernmental organizations, and employers can also use this book as a resource to develop, implement, and evaluate their programs with their employees, clients, and local community individuals, families, and groups. The MCEM program process promotes diversity, culture, and inclusion. It recognizes the voices of all stakeholder groups regardless of their knowledge, skills, and/or social status in society and provides them with equal opportunities to participate in the decision-making process. Hence, it also addresses the issues of equity and social justice and makes the MCEM programs more inclusive and representative of all stakeholders including the program participants. The use of the MCEM framework not only helps learners to successfully accomplish their program by achieving their program goals and/or objectives, it also helps to

identify and utilize strengths and resources of all program stakeholders that they exchange, share, and use after the formal completion of program, which ensures the sustainability of the MCEM programs.

This book guides and facilitates learners in performing all kinds of SL, such as direct SL through which learners directly work with program participants and have a face-to-face contact with them. For instance, when learners directly work with their program stakeholders including the program participants (who are the target beneficiaries of a program) to develop, implement, and evaluate their program, they perform a direct service to the community. Due to the advancement of technology, learners can either choose to work in-person with program stakeholders including program participants or they also work with them online. The online SL is particularly important because many institutions are offering courses online and students complete their course assignments including their SL assignments online. Students are also likely to work on their thesis and dissertation online. Moreover, since the recent Pandemic, online learning has been quite prevalent among institutions and learners. It is important to integrate SL into online courses to provide students with experiential and applied experience in their online classes. As mentioned earlier, this book also facilitates learners to accomplish SL projects in online classes and facilitate quite similar engagement and participation of program stakeholders. Hence, learners can perform indirect SL for which they do not directly work with their program participants. For instance, rather than carrying out any in-personal or online face-to-face workshops or educational sessions to implement a program, learners can develop a resource (manual, educational videos, brochure, flyer, pamphlet, etc.) and disseminate that resource among program participants or target beneficiaries. It is worth mentioning, that for the MCEM program process, learners still collaborate and engage with program stakeholders including program participants even if they choose to develop a resource and disseminate among program participants instead of directly educating them by conducting any in-person or online workshops or educational sessions.

In some situations, it becomes difficult for learners to reach out and engage some stakeholders during the time period in which they need to complete their SL project, in those situations, learners can gather information about these stakeholders, their roles, and influences on the program from those who learners can access to, speak with, and engage them for their program. Additionally, learners can also read and research about those stakeholders who are not accessible to learn about their roles and influences on their program and participants. Usually, stakeholders are quite accessible and since the MCEM programs offer and promotes a collaborative process, when

stakeholder groups from different engagement levels interact with each other, communicate, and work together for the program, they explore and find out ways to access and engage those stakeholders who are difficult to access and engage in the program. For examples, government personnel and/or representatives who are responsible for forming public policies and procedures and take important decisions which directly or indirectly affect program participants are quite busy and sometimes it becomes difficult to reach out to them and engage them in the program within the due course of time.

Further, learners can perform advocacy-based SL in which they focus on a specific issue and raise awareness about it among program participants, reach out to decision-makers, and carry out campaigns to address or eliminate that problem from the community or society, such as gender disparities, child abuse, domestic violence, health and safety, environmental sustainability, and income inequalities. For instance, learners advocate for a new policy for the welfare of children and families. For this purpose, they can write letters and reach out to their local, state, or federal level personnel who are influential and responsible for creating such policies. It is worth mentioning that for the MCEM program process, a collaborative and engaged process helps learners to achieve positive program outcomes. In this case, learners identify and engage all possible stakeholders who determine their strategy to advocate for a new policy. Although government personnel and/or representatives, who are influential and responsible for creating such policies are relevant stakeholders may or may not be engaged in the process of developing a strategy or campaign, they can become a part of it once they are reached out by the stakeholders who are identified, engaged, and utilized by the learner for this purpose. Finally, learners conduct research or support research efforts and/or write grants to study a particular problem to learn its causes for addressing and eliminating it from communities. Again, for the MCEM program process, active engagement, participation, and collaboration is essential for the success and sustainability of a program. For instance, if learners plan on writing and submitting a grant proposal for their local community families, it is crucial for learners to engage these families and other relevant stakeholder groups and gather information about their important problems and essential needs to learn about their intensively, significance, prevalence, and incidence, and focus on important and immediate issues and needs of these families on their grant proposal. Any baseline survey or assessment (formal or informal) data about target families can substantially strengthen the grant proposal. For this purpose, learners need to identify program stakeholders and engage them through the process of writing a grant. Hence, this book provides learners with many options and opportunities to perform all kinds of SL to serve local

communities, gain applied and experiential learning experience, and bring positive changes in local communities, society, and globally.

This book brings people of various qualities, backgrounds, and cultures together and provide them with opportunities to learn about each other, respect each other's perspectives, and engage in a collaborative process to systematically develop, implement, and evaluate their program to achieve short-term and long-term goals and objectives. The MCEM program process promote and value peoples' qualities, resources, experiences, and expertise that they can potentially offer and share in developing, implementing, and evaluating programs in various settings. Hence, this book is a comprehensive but simple roadmap for students, instructors, researchers, practitioners, and organizations, Since the MCEM program process invites and engages all relevant stakeholders from different engagement levels, recognize their voices, utilize their knowledge and expertise, and provide them with opportunities to actively participate in the decision-making process throughout the program lifecycle, it addresses important issues of inclusion, diversity, and social justice.

This is the first book which presents the MCEM framework, its' effective operationalization, and a systematic process to develop, implement, and evaluate the MCEM programs on all topics, populations, and settings to foster SL and community engagement in societies around the world. Existing books (e.g. Darling et al., 2022; Duncan & Goddard, 2017; Linder & Hayes, 2018; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2013; Strait & Nordyke, 2015; Tinto, 1993) on SL and community engagement are quite general, which provide a review of existing literature and share general strategies and resources about SL and community engagement. This book shows a real-world impact because it helps learners to systematically develop, implement, and evaluate programs on any topic/issue, in any setting, and with any group of the population in societies around the world to bring positive changes in the lives of individuals, families, groups, and organizations. Following are five specific contributions that this book makes in SL and community engagement: (1) this book provides learners with a systematic, applied, and real-life experience of SL and community engagement through the MCEM program process; (2) this book promotes and encourage active engagement and participants of all stakeholders throughout the program lifecycle regardless of their social status in society, which results in inclusive, sustainable, and representative programs; (3) this book helps learners to address important and immediate needs and issues of individuals, families, groups, and organizations in societies around the world; (4) this book fosters engagement and collaboration among school, community, and workplace, which increases sustainability and positive outcomes locally and nationally; and (5) this book addresses existing gaps in SL and community

engagement, and offers one MCEM program process globally to facilitate effective communication, collaboration, and engagement among students, instructors, researchers, practitioners, and organizations across disciplines around the world.

In sum, this book is broader enough that can be applied to and utilized by various disciplines, fields, and audiences and simultaneously, it is narrow to an extent which provides specific and step-by-step guidelines to students, instructors, researchers, and practitioners to systematically develop, implement, and evaluate their programs based on various topics, settings, and groups of the population. Due to the flexibility, adaptability, and effective operationalization of the MCEM framework, this book can be used in various ways to develop, implement, and evaluate programs of unique and distinctive scopes, lengths, and modes.

CONTEXT OF THE BOOK

As this book is grounded in the MCEM framework, which promotes SL and community engagement in school, community, and workplace by providing a systematic procedure to learners for developing, implementing, and evaluating programs, hence, it promotes and substantiates existing efforts toward SL, outreach, and community engagement. Although outreach and SL initiatives and efforts were initiated and informally carried out in the past, SL formally started in 20th century in the US (Chambers & Lavery, 2017), and since then it has been used and carried out globally (Chambers & Lavery, 2022). Different countries started community engagement and SL programs at different time periods due to different factors, such as financial resources, sufficient knowledge and expertise, supportive environment, sociocultural, and historical contexts (Davis et al., 2021; Jelinčić et al., 2022; Kusujiarti, 2011; McCarthy et al., 2005; Rusu, 2020; Xing & Ma, 2010).

For instance, SL and community engagement efforts started in 1800 through which parents' support groups and mother study groups were formed to share and discuss child-rearing approaches and practices in the US (Duncan & Goddard, 2017). Over time, the land grant university system was created through which colleges and universities formally adopted SL and community engagement practices so that students could gain practical skills along with their basic course content knowledge (Darling et al., 2022). Additionally, another purpose was to educate masses and local communities about research-based knowledge on family, social, and legal issues and provide them

with appropriate skills to help them prevent important problems and function well in community and society (Duncan & Goddard, 2017). Further, a cooperative extension system was created by Congress in 1914 and the purpose was to promote the application of research knowledge, reach out to masses, and provide that knowledge in nontraditional academic settings (Darling et al., 2022). University-based outreach efforts have been carried out through which students gain experiential learning by conducting their SL projects, practicums, and internships related to their course contents (Darling et al., 2014). Students not only gain SL experiences through these projects and partnerships, but they also develop important connections with local, national, and international communities outside of the classroom (Duncan & Goddard, 2017). SL practices not only prepare students personally, academically, professionally, culturally, and ethically, students also make unique contribution in improving well-being of children and families and bring positive changes in their lives (Raza & Richey, 2021).

Family life education (FLE) also has been a part of outreach and SL efforts, which provides family life educators with essential knowledge on ten content areas of family relationship and development, such as interpersonal relationships, human sexuality, parent education, internal dynamics of families, human growth and development, etc. (Bredehoft & Cassidy, 1995; Bredehoft & Walcheski, 2011; NCFR, 2014, 2018, 2024). Students and family life educators can develop their programs on any of the ten content areas that they can offer to different groups of the population by using various modes of delivery, such as in-person and online (Ballard, 2020; Darling et al., 2020; Raza & Richey, 2021). FLE programs are primarily related to family science and human development, which also promotes interdisciplinary collaboration (NCFR, 2018, 2024). FLE contents grow and improve people's knowledge and skills on different areas of family life to strengthen family relationships and development over time (Hamon & Smith, 2014, 2017; Umberson & Thomeer, 2020).

There has been a substantial progress in outreach efforts and service delivery since its initiation; however, there is still essential need to reach out to underrepresented and underprivileged diverse groups of the population, improve school, community, and workplace collaboration, and develop culturally appropriate programs (Raza, 2022). Since the MCEM framework considers culture and diversity as the central aspects of the program process, it promotes and fosters diversity, culture, and inclusion in a collaborative and engagement program process for developing, implementing, and evaluating the MCEM programs. Essentially, the use and application of the MCEM