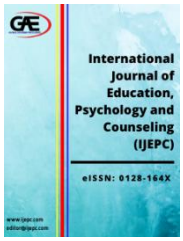
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EXPLORING THE TAR FRAMEWORK FOR TRANSFORMATIVE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN ETHICS AND CIVILISATION EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Transformative teaching and learning approaches have gained increasing attention for their potential to connect classroom knowledge with real-world experiences and social engagement. However, conventional approaches to teaching ethics and civilisation often rely on lectures and written assessments, providing limited opportunities for students to apply ethical concepts through meaningful community-based experiences. This study aimed to develop and evaluate the TAR framework: Teroka (Explore), Aplikasi (Application), and Refleksi (Reflection) as a transformative teaching and learning approach for the Appreciation of Ethics and Civilisation (PEP) course at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK). An exploratory sequential mixed-methods design was employed. In the first phase, focus group discussions involving 25 students explored their experiences of the three stages of the TAR framework. The qualitative findings informed the focus of the

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second phase, which involved a cross-sectional survey of 687 students who had experienced TAR-based learning. Qualitative data were analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-stage thematic analysis, while quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlation. The qualitative analysis generated three principal themes: enhanced understanding and interaction during exploration, development of values and essential skills through community application, and increased confidence and responsibility through reflection. Quantitatively, students reported high levels of meaningful learning (M = 6.02, SD = 1.04) and subject effectiveness (M = 6.15, SD = 1.02). A strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship was found between meaningful learning and subject effectiveness, $r(685) = .890$, $p < .001$. Integration of the findings indicated that the quantitative results extended and supported the initial qualitative insights regarding students' experiences of TAR-based learning. Overall, students perceived the TAR framework as supporting connections among ethical knowledge, community engagement, and reflective learning. The framework aligns with SDG 4, particularly its emphasis on inclusive and quality education that develops relevant knowledge, skills, and values for sustainable development.

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Keyword:

Community-Based Learning; Meaningful Learning; Subject Effectiveness; TAR Framework; Transformative Teaching And Learning

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Introduction

In 2019, the General Studies Course at higher education institutions in Malaysia was enhanced by introducing a new course, "Appreciation of Ethics and Civilization" (PEP). This course emphasizes the values of ethics and professionalism. Consequently, transformative teaching in this course is necessary to optimize the achievement of these values among students. To transform the teaching and learning of the PEP course at University of Malaysia Kelantan, the TAR framework was introduced. The primary motivation for transforming the teaching methods of the PEP course stemmed from findings by UMK instructors regarding the effectiveness and acceptance of the PEP course among students and instructors. Both studies indicated that a lack of interest in the PEP course persisted (Razak et al., 2022, 2022a). The evaluation of the PEP course was linked to conventional teaching and learning methods, which focused on lectures, 'pencil and paper' assessments such as quizzes, final exams, and report assessments. The lack of practical elements and digitalization in the course's teaching methods also contributed to students' disinterest (Shaikh & Nikooherafmaher, 2022).

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Publicly, there is a stereotype that MPU courses are irrelevant to the educational needs and human development of graduates at local universities, evidenced by proposals in parliament to either abolish MPU courses or not make them mandatory university courses (Chua, 2022). The motivation to transform the teaching of the PEP course is further reinforced by recent trends at the Department of Higher Education, which coordinates MPU courses. Currently, the department maps affective elements in courses like PEP. The responsibility assigned to the PEP course is part of a strategy to produce more holistic graduates, aligned with SDG 4, which aims to provide quality education, and the Malaysian Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 2015 – 2025, which emphasizes attributes such as ethics and national identity among students (Nor Shela et al., 2022). Therefore, incorporating teaching methods that combine theory and practice, supported by digitalization, is crucial to ensure active and collaborative learning, leading to meaningful learning experiences for students. Thus, the TAR (Explore-Apply-Reflect) method is a transformative teaching approach implemented in the PEP course.

Despite increasing recognition of experiential, digitally supported, and community-based learning, limited empirical evidence is available on an integrated instructional framework that combines exploration, real-world application, and structured reflection in the teaching of ethics and civilisation in Malaysian higher education. Existing conventional approaches rely substantially on lectures, written assessments, and classroom-based discussions, which may restrict students' opportunities to translate ethical concepts into community engagement and reflective practice (Sadiqzade, 2025). The present study addresses this gap by evaluating the TAR framework through students' experiences and by examining the relationship between perceived subject effectiveness and meaningful learning.

Development of the TAR Framework

In developing the TAR framework, an integrative theory approach is employed by incorporating theories related to digitalization, social interaction-based learning (constructivist theory), and reflection theory to complete the TAR framework. In the first stage, "Explore," the concept of active learning is emphasized, aligning with Vygotsky's theory. During this stage, students engage in group learning and idea sharing as they explore theories and concepts of ethics and civilization and identify ethical issues to be addressed (Topciu et al., 2015).

The second stage, "Apply," is based on Problem-Based Learning (PBL) theory. In applying ethical issues related to community, environment, cultural diversity, and heritage, students will undertake practical activities to resolve issues in selected situations. At this stage, students will learn problem-solving methods and ethical interactions within their groups and with diverse community members. In addition, this technique allows students to address rapid technological advances and developing workplaces that will be required in the foreseeable future (Subramani et al., 2018).

The third step in TAR, "Reflect," aligns with Dewey's reflection theory. According to Dewey, reflection should be instilled in students as it helps them cultivate humanitarian values through their activities. The teaching of ethical and civilizational theories and practical applications allows students to reflect on the challenges and their roles in upholding ethical civilization in their daily lives (Yordanka et al., 2015).

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Additionally, digitalization theory based on TPACK (Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge) is applied in the TAR framework. TPACK integrates learning content, pedagogy, and technology, and this concept is utilized in TAR to facilitate transformative learning activities. Digital elements such as interactive book creation, e-portfolios, gamification, video-making platforms, and social media platforms are employed by students to explore, apply, and reflect on ethics and civilization (Koehler et al., 2009).

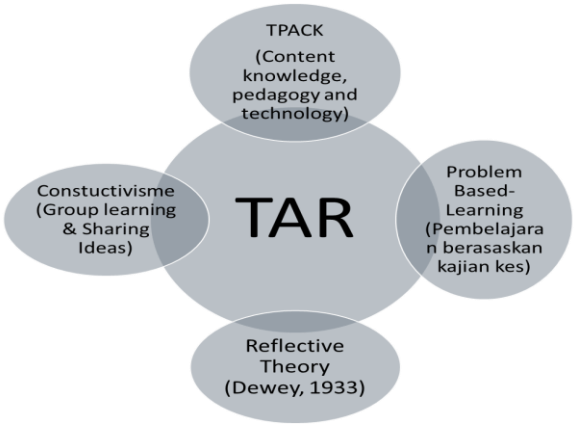


Figure 1. Teroka (Explore), Aplikasi (Application), and Refleksi (Reflection) Framework

Implementation of the TAR Framework in Ethics and Civilisation Courses

In implementing the transformative teaching approach of TAR, the 'Explore' stage aligns with the first course learning outcome, which is for students to explain the concepts of ethics and civilization within the Malaysian context (C2, PLO11). Instructors guide students through online lectures supported by both physical teaching aids such as PEP textbooks, workbooks and digital materials. During this exploratory phase, students are instructed to investigate ethical issues within their environment. These issues are categorized into four areas: community awareness, ethnic relations integration, environmental conservation, and cultural heritage appreciation. Students then explore solutions to these ethical issues through group collaboration and discussions with their instructors. To achieve the second learning outcome, which involves comparing the systems, stages of development, social progress, and cultural advancements across ethnicities (A4, PLO11), students engage in community activities, cross-cultural interactions, and heritage-related activities over a specified period.

The second step in TAR, 'Approach', is implemented in this stage. The students are required to apply classroom theory to real-world context. This activity is also characterized by experiential and meaningful learning, as students gain experiences from the activities they undertake, which enhances their affective development during and after these activities. This process requires students to interact with management and plan activities that engage the involved community, such as the disabled, the elderly, and children. This social interaction method is crucial as it helps students understand that each community has unique characteristics that should be celebrated. Consequently, this not only improves the students' affective levels but also clearly demonstrates the application of professionalism values during the activities.

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To achieve the third learning outcome, where students discuss contemporary issues related to economics, politics, society, culture, and the environment from an ethical and civilizational perspective (A2, PLO11), students will delve into these issues in the third TAR step, 'Reflect.' In preparing their reflections, students will design presentation methods to effectively analyze the impact on society and the environment. Students will present their findings through videos which include the activities they have conducted with the community they have been assigned to. Furthermore, students are exposed to contemporary ethical and cultural issues as they present their chosen topics. This reflection process is highly significant in instilling ethical and professional values among students. Additionally, the interaction with the community that happens along the process of completing the task serves as a reference for other courses in the effort to develop a more holistic and balanced curriculum

Meaningful Learning and Subject Effectiveness in TAR-Based Teaching and Learning

The efficacy of the subject and meaningful learning is interrelated (Ali, 2019). These two antecedents should be statistically examined, particularly in teaching and learning using the TAR framework.

The subject's efficacy is derived from the valuable knowledge that students acquire, which results in significant learning or practical application in their daily lives (Alt, 2015). It is also highlighted that student who engage in the genuine process of teaching and learning in tertiary education can cultivate a strong sense of motivation to enhance their own well-being and become more compassionate individuals, not only for themselves but also for others (Angeles, 2012). That is the fundamental nature of tertiary education, as it is advantageous to all individuals in our vicinity.

In addition, the learning process in tertiary education can continuously cultivate self-resilience or a high degree of adaptability to forthcoming challenges, whether in the future career path or in the individual, as it emphasises both internal and external resilience (Azila-Gbettor et al., 2022). This implies that the learning process in tertiary education is effective in fostering meaningful self-learning during the study period. Consequently, the hypothesis that the present study suggests is as follows:

H1: There is a positive relationship between subject effectiveness and meaningful learning in teaching and learning

The hypothesis is offered in the quantitative findings to supplement the qualitative thematic analysis.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework guides the quantitative component of the study (Figure 2). Pearson's correlation was used to examine the relationship between perceived subject effectiveness and meaningful learning within TAR-based teaching and learning.

This analysis addresses the second research objective, which examines the relationship between perceived subject effectiveness and meaningful learning.

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Therefore, the discussion of the literature review attempts to describe the relationships in the conceptual framework, as shown below (Figure 2):

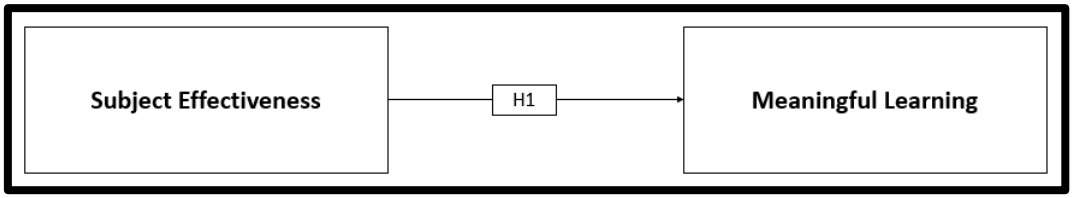


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework of Subject Effectiveness and Meaningful Learning

The statistical data could support the qualitative findings by addressing the students' points of convergence or agreement on the teaching and learning process in tertiary education, particularly while developing the TAR framework.

Summary of Hypothesis for Quantitative Analysis

Table 1. Summary of Hypothesis for Quantitative Analysis

No.	Hypothesis
H_1	There is a positive relationship between subject effectiveness and meaningful learning in teaching and learning

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to evaluate the TAR framework: Teroka (Explore), Aplikasi (Application), and Refleksi (Reflection) as a transformative teaching and learning approach for the Appreciation of Ethics and Civilisation course. Specifically, the study pursued two research objectives:

1. To explore students' experiences and perceptions of the exploration, application, and reflection processes within the TAR framework.
2. To examine the relationship between perceived subject effectiveness and meaningful learning among students participating in the TAR-based course.

Methodology

Research Design

The study employed an exploratory sequential mixed methods design to evaluate students' experiences of the TAR framework in the Appreciation of Ethics and Civilisation course at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan. In the first phase, qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions involving 25 students to explore their experiences and perceptions of the Teroka, Aplikasi, and Refleksi stages. The qualitative themes informed the focus of the subsequent quantitative phase, particularly the examination of meaningful learning and perceived subject effectiveness. In the second phase, a cross-sectional survey involving 687 students examined the relationship between these two constructs. The findings were integrated

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during interpretation to determine how the statistical results extended the initial qualitative insights.

Participants

Participants were students enrolled in the Appreciation of Ethics and Civilisation (PEP) course at Universiti Malaysia Kelantan who had directly experienced TAR-based teaching and learning. Purposive sampling was used because eligibility depended on participants' experience of the Teroka, Aplikasi, and Refleksi stages.

For the qualitative component, 25 students participated in five focus group discussions. Each group consisted of five students who had participated in the TAR learning activities during the semester. Participants were selected purposively because they had direct experience of all three stages of the framework. The selection criteria included enrolment in the PEP course, participation in the assigned TAR activities, and willingness to discuss their learning experiences.

For the quantitative component, 687 students enrolled in the PEP course participated in the survey after completing the TAR-based learning activities. Purposive sampling was used to recruit students who met the eligibility criteria. Detailed demographic frequencies are not reported because they must be verified against the original dataset before publication.

Data Collection

In the qualitative phase, data were collected through five focus group discussions. FGDs enabled the researchers to obtain detailed accounts of students' experiences and perceptions of the TAR framework (Boateng, 2012). Table 2 presents the composition and duration of the focus groups.

Table 2. Distribution of Focus Group Discussion Participants

FGD group	Number of informants	Participant identification	Duration
Group 1	5	G1-I1 to G1-I5	60–90 minutes
Group 2	5	G2-I1 to G2-I5	60–90 minutes
Group 3	5	G3-I1 to G3-I5	60–90 minutes
Group 4	5	G4-I1 to G4-I5	60–90 minutes
Group 5	5	G5-I1 to G5-I5	60–90 minutes
Total	25	25 informants	-

Five informants participated in each of the five focus groups, producing a total qualitative sample of 25 students. Each session lasted approximately 60–90 minutes and was facilitated using a semi-structured discussion guide. The sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim for thematic analysis.

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The discussions focused on students' experiences of the Teroka, Aplikasi, and Refleksi stages; their engagement in assigned community activities; and the perceived contributions of these experiences to their ethical and professional development.

Quantitative Survey Collection

Following the qualitative phase, an online questionnaire was distributed through Google Forms to students who had completed TAR-based learning in the PEP course. Data collection took place over approximately one month. Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before questionnaire completion. A total of 687 student responses were included in the quantitative analysis, and responses were anonymised before analysis.

Quantitative Instrument

The questionnaire contained 20 items measuring two constructs: meaningful learning (10 items) and perceived subject effectiveness (10 items). Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale. Subject matter experts reviewed the items for content relevance and clarity, and the questionnaire was pilot tested with approximately 30 respondents. Cronbach's alpha exceeded .70 for each construct, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage thematic data analysis, which offers a structured and systematic approach (Table 3).

Table 3. Braun and Clarke's Six-Stage Thematic Analysis

Adopted from Braun and Clarke (2006)

No.	Six-stage of thematic data analysis	Braun and Clarke (2006)
1	Collect the data	Refer to all the data collected as the data corpus. This encompasses transcripts, audio recordings, documents, and any other pertinent materials that were collected during the research.
2	Engage with the data	Read and re-read transcripts, listen to audio recordings, and note any in-depth observations to become familiarised with the data. This familiarisation process enables the researcher to fully engage with the data collection process, thereby identifying the most significant observations and patterns.
3	Code the extracts from the data	Develop unique identifiers and labels to symbolise critical aspects of the data research inquiries. The coding techniques entail systematically examining the entire data set to identify pertinent and appropriate patterns that emphasise the research questions.

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4	Generate the code categories from the codes	Determine the concepts and ideas that contribute to the semantic content of the data. It also assists in the organisation of the results into categories that are meaningful.
5	Conceptualise the themes from the categorised coded extracts	Locate the themes as coherent and meaningful patterns in the data and establish the character of each theme in relation to the existing literature. This is to guarantee that the themes are both theoretically supported, and data driven.
6	Contextualise and represent the findings	Combine the analytic narrative with evocative data extracts to inform the findings.

Thematic analysis has been characterised as a varied and useful instrument for researchers, particularly in relation to the presentation of comprehensive and detailed but intricate data. This gives an approachable technique to manage the difficult shifting processes between the physical descriptions and the abstract interpretations guided by the literature (Meriam, 2009).

The six stages of thematic data analysis are as follows: (1) collect the data; (2) engage with the data; (3) code the extracts from the data; (4) generate the code categories from the codes; (5) conceptualise the themes from the categories coded extracts; and (6) contextualise and represent the findings. Each stage is essential for ensuring a comprehensive and rigorous analysis.

The initial stage involved collecting all pertinent data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For example, researchers conducted a comprehensive document analysis of the transcripts from Focus Group Discussions. This guarantees that the comprehensive data corpus serves as the foundation for the subsequent analysis, enabling a comprehensive examination of all research questions. In the second stage, researchers become integral components of the qualitative research instrument by fully immersing themselves in the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). During this phase, the following procedures are implemented: (1) the transcripts are read and reread, and (2) the audio recordings are listened to in order to develop a deeper understanding of the data. This phase is crucial for researchers as it initiates the process of identifying themes and patterns, as well as acquiring a comprehensive comprehension of the data. Additionally, comprehensive notes are recorded and maintained to document any noteworthy observations and contemplations.

The researchers conduct a systematic coding of the collected data during the third stage (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It entails the identification and labelling of significant themes in the data in accordance with the research queries that have been developed. Codes are unique identifiers that summarise critical aspects of the data, thereby facilitating the efficient organisation and management of the data. One of the researcher's responsibilities during the fourth stage is to organise the data into broader categories that are consistent with the fundamental concepts and ideas that underlie the semantic content of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This enables researchers to recognise the interconnected components of the data. The fifth phase entails the identification of themes that are derived from the categorised codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The emerging themes should be coherent and meaningful, as evidenced by the existing literature. The themes in the data should be supported and grounded by the TAR framework.

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The final phase involves the integration of the results into a cohesive narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To present rich and nuanced data, the researchers integrated the analytics insights with the illustrative data extracts. This stage exemplifies the cyclical nature of thematic analysis, as the researchers must revisit earlier stages to further refine themes. This is to guarantee the analysis's precision and profundity.

Consequently, the study implemented Braun and Clarke (2006) to examine the influence of the TAR framework on the learning and teaching of students. This method emphasises the cyclical nature of data analysis, as the researcher alternates between phases to confirm the veracity of the data, as per the six-stage approach to data analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics, version 27. Means and standard deviations were calculated to summarise meaningful learning and perceived subject effectiveness. Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between the two constructs. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were informed of their right to withdraw without penalty. All data were anonymised and stored securely to protect confidentiality.

Findings

Qualitative Findings

For the qualitative component, thematic analysis was employed. The focus group discussions generated three principal themes. During Teroka, students reported enhanced understanding and interaction; during Aplikasi, they described the development of values and essential skills through community engagement; and during Refleksi, they reported increased confidence and responsibility. The following excerpts illustrate these themes.

> *The lecturers provide us with knowledge and direction regarding the PEP course topic as we study it in class. The educational tools that are employed to deepen our comprehension are fascinating. Digital platforms like gamification, e-learning, and even e-books are available to us (G2-I5).*

> *We watch the lecturer's prepared videos to gain an understanding of ethical dilemmas, which makes this process highly engaging. Because it addresses the ethical challenge that exists in the context of society, the video is not dull. Because the film is peppered with real-world examples that students offer from their personal experiences with ethical dilemmas, it is appropriate for us to learn from. For instance, chapter 7's discussion of technological ethics helps us, the younger generation, use technology more wisely. (G3-I1).*

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Table 4. Thematic Analysis of the Exploration Stage

Theme	Categories: Interaction with educators	Categories: Comprehension of digital material	Categories: Connection with individual life
Gain understanding and well-interaction	The text expresses students' claim that they are supervised well to explore the issue of ethics and civilization, especially related to the Malaysian context, such as environment, culture and appreciating the community.	The text proves that the learning material assists them to explore the issue of ethics and civilization. They state that the usage of e-book and attractive activities of gamification help them to obtain the real concept about the PEP course content.	This proves that students can explore the crisis of issues that happened to them as a younger generation. They reflect on themselves so that they will improve to become more ethical and have good manners.

Table 4 indicates that the exploration stage supported students in identifying and understanding key aspects of the PEP course. Positive interaction between instructors and students may foster curiosity and interest in learning (Akhtar et al., 2019).

Additionally, effective student engagement will facilitate students' comprehension of the learning objectives and the interactions between educators and students, leading to constructive feedback on particular courses (Razak et al., 2022a). Consequently, students will be motivated to submit any comments or enquiries regarding the course's learning outcomes. Feedback is considered a critical approach to fostering the development of independent learners by enabling them to evaluate, monitor, and control their own learning (Al-Bashir et al., 2016).

For the element of application (Aplikasi) the findings reveal that students can perform many activities that they choose from the themes; awareness of environment, tolerance among various races, appreciating culture and heritage, and respect for communities. It is consistent with educational policy and requirements that promote the development of cultural awareness and sensitivity. Contemporary higher educational environments are characterised by these primary facets (Coleman et al., 2021). From the activities that they selected they could learn many things and practise the right ethics in dealing with certain communities, for example:

> *While we were conducting activities with the community, our group chose to visit a special education school. There, we met students with disabilities who have their own unique talents. We organized activities like aerobics and participated with them in hydroponic planting. Additionally, we discovered that they have impressive skills in making donuts. We learned new techniques for making donuts in just 15 minutes. We also learned how to socialize with them, which helped change our previously negative perceptions about this group. It turns out there are many values, such as empathy and tolerance, that we can learn from them, as they go through life experiences different from ours". (G4-I5)*

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The findings suggest that applying classroom knowledge in community settings enabled students to gain practical experience and new insights. This interpretation is consistent with scholarship emphasising experiential learning, community projects, dialogue, and reflection in service-learning activities.

Table 5. Thematic Analysis of Students' Values and Essential Skills

Theme	Categories: Appreciate unique talents	Categories: Social skill with community	Categories: Appreciate with the individual life
Enhancing value and essential skill	The text expresses apprehension regarding the distinct skills that students with disabilities possess, which offer university students the opportunity to learn more from them.	The issue of the learners' ability to communicate effectively with the participants, particularly when they participate in multiple school activities, has emerged.	The text indicates that the students are aware that they should demonstrate empathy towards students with disabilities. The procedure induces a greater sense of appreciation for the life they currently lead.

Table 5 presents evidence concerning the development of students' values and essential skills. Students perceived the community-based activities as supporting communication, empathy, appreciation of individual differences, and practical learning.

Additionally, university students acquire the ability to effectively communicate with their peers. Their ability to communicate effectively is essential, as it enables them to establish a more meaningful relationship with society utilising effective communication (Ahmad et al., 2022). The students are also taught the value of empathy. In an intercultural context, he posited that the diversity experienced in relational and societal interaction was more significant in developing students' intercultural competencies than the diversity learned through traditional classroom methods, similar to Kolb's (1984) theory (Nicols, 2015).

In the third component, Refleksi, students considered their learning experiences and the meanings derived from the activities. Their accounts suggest that reflection supported confidence, responsibility, cultural appreciation, and inclusive learning, as illustrated in the following excerpts:

> *For instance, our group selects history and cultural appreciation activities to engage in during our chosen activities. It can help us see things more clearly and provide insightful knowledge on preserving our culture. I learned the worth of teamwork and the significance of maintaining traditional recipes through rendang cooking activities. Our bond was further deepened by these activities." (G3-I5)*

> *My appreciation for traditional dance has increased due to participating in the Inang dance, a traditional Malay dance. It is more than merely a movement, and the ideals and symbolism it represents must be upheld. Additionally, I had the opportunity to*

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attempt dancing, which I had never done before. Despite my shyness, I am glad that I was able to do it." (G3-I5)

Table 6. Thematic Analysis of Students' Confidence

Themes:	Determine what works well for every group	Encourage engagement with each other	Promotes responsibility among students
Boost confidence	The text expresses that students enhance self-esteem when they are able to decide to choose any activity that they need to perform as long as it has relationship with the themes of ethics.	The text proves that learners realize their potential when they participate in the cultural activity and they need to absorb the sentimental value of heritage in order to perform well in the traditional activity.	The text proves that the reflection process enables students to increase the sense of belonging with the valuable heritage. They feel the necessity to preserve the old traditional treasure and also allow them to try new skills.

The interview reveals that students (G3-I5) have a chance to choose what activity suits their team. Additionally, they realize that it is a big responsibility for Malaysians to appreciate the traditional heritage and preserve it to maintain the value of Malaysian identity. This insight is obtained among students from the reflection process, in which students work together to ensure that the activity is done effectively. The act of reflection in this context is meant to indicate a process that has gone through by students, and the necessity of active thinking when encountering obstacles and problems (Machost et al., 2023).

The account further suggests that the new experience enabled students to consolidate their learning, engage critically with their experiences, and consider how this knowledge could inform future action (Williams, 2017).

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative analysis complements the current study's findings. Quantitative approaches provide statistical evidence to support the current study's hypotheses. Furthermore, it can support the qualitative findings and confirm the tested variable using the TAR framework.

Therefore, the statistical analysis (bivariate correlation) is carried out to supplement the focus group discussion (thematic analysis) and to explain the relationship between subject effectiveness and meaningful learning in teaching and learning (Table 6).

Hypothesis Testing: Relationship Between Subject Effectiveness and Meaningful Learning Descriptive Statistics and Correlation Analysis

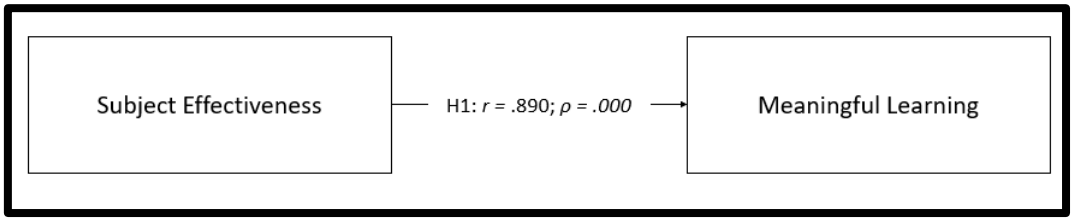
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Table 7. Descriptive Statistics and Pearson's Correlation Between Meaningful Learning and Subject Effectiveness

Variable	M	SD	1	2
1. Meaningful learning	6.02	1.04	—	-
2. Subject effectiveness	6.15	1.02	.890***	

Note. N = 687. M = mean; SD = standard deviation. ***p < .001.

Table 7 presents the descriptive statistics and correlation between meaningful learning and subject effectiveness. Students reported high levels of meaningful learning (M = 6.02, SD = 1.04) and subject effectiveness (M = 6.15, SD = 1.02). Pearson's correlation analysis revealed a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between meaningful learning and subject effectiveness, r(685) = .890, p < .001. This finding indicates that students who perceived the PEP course as more effective also tended to report higher levels of meaningful learning. Therefore, H1 was supported. However, because the analysis was correlational, the finding does not establish a causal relationship between the two variables.



Integration of Qualitative and Quantitative Findings

Integration of the two phases showed convergence between students' qualitative accounts and the quantitative results. During Teroka, students described enhanced understanding and interaction; during Aplikasi, they reported developing values and essential skills through community engagement; and during Refleksi, they reported greater confidence and responsibility. In the quantitative phase, meaningful learning and subject effectiveness were both rated highly and were strongly positively correlated, r(685) = .890, p < .001. Together, the findings suggest that students who perceived the course as effective were also more likely to experience their learning as meaningful. The integrated evidence is complementary and does not establish that the TAR framework caused changes in learning outcomes.

Discussion

The strong positive relationship between subject effectiveness and meaningful learning suggests that students' perceptions of an effective course are closely associated with their ability to regard the learning experience as relevant, useful, and applicable to their lives. Within the TAR framework, students were not limited to receiving ethical and civilisational knowledge through classroom instruction. They were also provided with opportunities to explore ethical issues, apply their knowledge through community-based activities, and reflect on their experiences. These interconnected processes may help explain why students who perceived the course as effective also reported meaningful learning. The finding is consistent with Alt (2015), who emphasised that constructivist learning environments can strengthen students'

engagement and academic self-efficacy, and Azila-Gbettor et al. (2022), who linked the meaningfulness of study with students' academic experiences and programme satisfaction.

The quantitative result also converges with the qualitative findings. During the Teroka stage, students reported improved understanding and interaction through digital and collaborative learning. During the Aplikasi stage, they described developing empathy, communication abilities, community awareness, and practical skills. During the Refleksi stage, they reported increased confidence, responsibility, and appreciation of cultural heritage. Taken together, the quantitative and qualitative evidence suggests that students perceived the TAR framework as supporting meaningful engagement with the PEP course. However, the strong correlation should not be interpreted as evidence that the TAR framework caused meaningful learning because the study did not employ a control group, experimental manipulation, or pre-test and post-test measurements.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, the participants were drawn from a single university and course, which may limit the transferability and generalisability of the findings to other institutional contexts. Second, the quantitative component relied on students' self-reported perceptions, which may be influenced by social-desirability and common-method bias. Third, the cross-sectional and correlational design does not permit causal conclusions regarding the effect of the TAR framework on meaningful learning or subject effectiveness. Fourth, the absence of pre-intervention measures or a comparison group prevents the study from determining whether students' learning improved after participating in TAR. Future research should employ longitudinal, pre-test/post-test, or quasi-experimental designs involving multiple universities and should assess additional learning outcomes using validated instruments.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that the TAR framework provides a structured approach through which students can explore ethical concepts, apply them in community settings, and reflect on their learning experiences. Students described meaningful engagement with communities, cultural heritage, environmental issues, and ethnic diversity. They also reported the development of values, communication skills, confidence, empathy, and responsibility. The strong positive relationship between perceived subject effectiveness and meaningful learning further indicates that students who regarded the course as effective were more likely to experience meaningful learning.

The TAR framework may therefore offer a useful pedagogical approach for ethics and civilisation courses that seek to integrate academic knowledge, community experience, digital learning, and structured reflection. Its emphasis on ethical awareness, practical skills, inclusivity, and responsible community participation is aligned with SDG 4, particularly the promotion of quality education that develops relevant knowledge, competencies, and values for sustainable development. Further evaluation across institutions and through longitudinal or quasi-experimental research is required before broader claims regarding its effectiveness can be established.

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Ethics Statement: Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained before data collection, and all responses were anonymised and stored securely.

Author Contribution Statement: Ateerah Abdul Razak conceptualised the study, developed the TAR framework, designed the methodology, supervised the research, and led the manuscript preparation. Nurul Afiqah Hussin contributed to data collection, qualitative analysis, literature review, and manuscript drafting. Nur Hafezah Hussein assisted with survey administration, quantitative data analysis, interpretation, and validation of findings. Nur Hafifah Jamalludin contributed to the focus group discussions, data management, thematic analysis, and manuscript revision. Azahah Abu Hassan supported the research design, integration of qualitative and quantitative findings, critical review, and editing. All authors reviewed, approved, and accepted responsibility for the final version of the manuscript before submission.

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