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IMPLEMENTATION OF 2i CAMP PROGRAM IN TITAS AS MULTI-CULTURAL
TEACHING AND LEARNING MODULE IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTE:
A CASE STUDY IN SUNWAY UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The Islamic and Asian Civilizations or TITAS subject at the Higher Learning Institute level in Malaysia still focuses totally on the delivery of the content, rather than the practicality and the appreciation towards the knowledge in daily life. Since TITAS is a compulsory subject for all students in order to complete their courses, it is taken for granted. There is no awareness or appreciation towards the subject which is actually a multi-cultural educational module that should be understood by students in order to strengthen Malaysia Civilization which consists of people from multiple races and religions. Thus, the 2i Camp (Interaction and Integrity) program was organized by Sunway University's lecturers in order to give an opportunity to the students who are taking the subject to practice the multi-cultural education in Higher Learning Institute. Hence, the objective of this paper is to assess and observe the level of interaction between students of different races and ethnics through the 2i Camp program. This research utilizes the qualitative method, by interviewing the students who had already participated in the 2i Camp on January 2018. This is to obtain the theme of the learning outcomes throughout the program. According to the research findings, there are four main themes in this research. Firstly, there were communications and harmony interactions between students of different races through the Ice-Breaking activity. Besides that, the students were also able to identify the cultures and lifestyles of the different races through the traditional games carried out. In addition to that, the intellectual and critical thinking skills of the students were developed through a simple game of designing and building their own replica of buildings that represented the three main races in Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

‘Islamic and Asian Civilizations’ (Tamadun Islam dan Tamadun Asia or TITAS) is one of the compulsory subjects for students in both private and public higher learning institutes for their first degree. This course encompasses the introduction to civilization, the evolution and the interaction between Islamic, Malay, Chinese and Indian civilizations, and the contemporary civilization issue in Islamic and Asian civilizations. The focus of this subject is to provide the students with the educational modules of multiple cultures in their efforts to produce students, who are knowledgeable in the nation’s heritage and history, to cultivate positive moral values, possess the identity of nationality and to appreciate diversity (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016).

According to Abd Rashid bin Abdul Halim (2015), most of the students consider TITAS as a subject based on Islamic studies and history. It is also perceived as a review for certain subjects that were taught in schools. These assumptions caused the students to be uninterested, lacking focus or taking the course for granted. Hence, negative perceptions and ill-advised views of the course must be corrected in order to make this subject more interesting and appealing towards students. The teaching method used for this course must be very compelling in order to achieve the learning objectives. In their efforts to successfully achieve the learning outcomes, the lecturers in Sunway University have structured a program called Interaction and Integrity Camp (2i Camp) to give equal opportunities to the students who are taking TITAS to practice multi-cultural education in higher learning institutes.

THE PROGRAM'S APPROACH

Generally, approach is usually defined as to come close or near. However, the term 'approach' used in academical context is to refer to how a subject is taught based on the objective of the subject (Yazilmiwati, 2014). According to Ahmad (1997), approach is to bridge a gap in an education field and each approach should reflect the objective of the learning process. Thus, lecturers or educators must plan, organize and carry out meaningful activities for their students in order to achieve the learning outcomes. The implementation of suitable and effective approach in learning modules will help the students to understand the subject much better and be able to achieve the learning outcomes, as explained by Omar al-Syaibani (1991). He said, the teaching methods in education is created to ease the process of teaching and learning for the students and to allow them to achieve as many learning objectives as possible.

Therefore, the 2i Camp program that relies on the multi-cultural education module focuses more on experience-based learning by making the activities included in this program compulsory to the students who took the subject. According to Carl Rogers (1969), experience-based learning focuses more on the students' necessities and wants. Rogers listed down some of the characteristics of experience-based learning, which are personal involvement, self-initiated, learner evaluation, and giving persuasive effect on learners.

In addition to that, this program was filled with lots of physical activities and active exchange of mind outside of learning session and university compound. The purpose of this program is to instill positive values among students by focusing on two main components which are integrity and interaction. The content of this program leans more towards patriosme where it will test the students's mind and knowledge of the history and the diversity of Malaysia's culture. The aspirational values that were highlighted in this activity will trigger unity and increase understanding among races. Hence, the 2i Camp program has listed down four objectives to be achieved, as follow:

- a. To apply communication and harmonious interaction between races in the effort to instill unity in order to protect the peace among Malaysians.
- b. To create the spirit of love to your country by appreciating the contributions by past national heroes.
- c. To test the physical and mental capabilities of students about the multi-ethnic cultures in Malaysia
- d. To strengthen teamwork and tolerance among students of different backgrounds, cultures and religions.

In order to achieve the objective of the program, multiple modules were constructed by combining various academic, mind test and physical activities together. These activities were carried out outside of the classroom. The activities are listed as follow:

a) Ice-Breaking Session

The ice-breaking session is of the must-do activities handled by the facilitators. The purpose of this activity is to bridge a gap between the newly formed group members among the participants and also to build relationship between the participants and the facilitators. This activity is able to create a sense of friendship and warmth between the participants and the facilitators so there will not be any kind of communication barriers or awkwardness throughout the program. One of the games usually played during the ice-breaking session is called ‘This, This, That, That’, where the participants are required to mimic the facilitators’ actions and words quickly and correctly. The game started with a slower pace to give the participants some chance to familiarise themselves with the game. After few rounds, the facilitators will begin to pick up some pace and play the game much faster. This game can be played individually, with a partner, and even played in a group. This game enables the participants to be more active to communicate among themselves.

b) Completing the Puzzles

In this activity, participants are given a set of puzzle pieces of various national figures who have contributed mightily to the country. The participants are required to solve the puzzle and to identify the figures. Then, they are required to name the figure and what are their accomplishments to the facilitators. The purpose of this game is to introduce the nation’s greatest figures to the younger generations and to appreciate their contributions and sacrifices to the country.

c) 'Magunatip' Dance

The 'Magunatip' dance is a traditional dance of the various sub-ethnic of the Murut in island Sabah. The word 'Magunatip' was taken from the word 'atip' which means to press on two surfaces (Kamus Dewan, 2000). 'Magunatip' dancers require good skills and agility to dance while stepping over bamboos that are used to create sound and rhythm for the dance. The dance does not usually require any musical accompaniment. This is because the sound made by the hitting of the bamboos produces a loud and interesting beat and melody. This dance is usually performed by the Muruts during certain ceremonies including to show respect for their guests. During the 2i Camp, all participants are required to perform and experience the dance themselves. This allows the participants to learn about one of the many cultures of the Murut ethnic in Malaysia

d) Building Game

In this activity, participants are required to design and create a building which symbolizes the three main races in Malaysia which are the Malays, the Chinese, and the Indians. Used items such as drinking boxed, straws, newspapers and masking tapes are the only materials allowed and provided for this activity. During the designing/building and also the presentation part of the activity, the participants are expected to share and exchange ideas and information regarding their build. This is to help the participants to think more creatively and innovatively while improving their intellectual capabilities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this research, researchers utilized semi-structured interview method because this is a flexible method which allows for respondents to describe what the researchers are thinking. In addition, this method can also be used to identify the respondents' experience and background. The findings of the indirect interview will shape the theme of the research which will then be compiled in a single complete report. The report is the result of the research in qualitative format (Patton, 1990). Hence, in order too achieve the objective of the research, researchers have interviewed 15 students who have joined the recent 2i Camp. These students were chosen based on their different cultural background to help researchers to obtain as much necessary information as possible in order to deeply understand the respondents' experience joining the program.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

In general, there were 400 students participated in the program. The researchers have chosen 15 respondents representing the three main races in Malaysia which are Malay, Chinese and Indian to be interviewed. Each race was represented by at least 5 respondents. All of the respondents participated very actively throughout the program. There were 8 male participants and 7 female participants selected as respondents. All of them are students of Sunway University, taking different bachelor degree courses. The analysis has found that there are four main themes in this research, and are listed as follows:

a) The Theme of Communication and Interaction between Different Races through Ice-Breaking Activity

The result of the interview analysis found that 100% of the respondents agreed the Ice-Breaking activity helps them to build and create a good communication and interaction bridge between the participants of different backgrounds and races. This theme is illustrated from the interview as follows:

Respondent 1:

In the Ice-Breaking activity, we were able to interact openly and politely with one another without looking at the background of their races or culture.

Respondent 2:

The Ice-Breaking activity helps us to communicate and interact with people of other races. We were able to get to know more people from different culture.

Respondent 6:

The Ice-Breaking activity encourages us to talk and interact with new friends of different races and culture.

Respondent 7:

We have to speak in Bahasa Malaysia to play the game. It helps us to sharpen and improve our Bahasa Malaysia that we rarely used in our daily life.

Respondent 11:

We rarely talked to each other in class before, but this activity helps us to build the friendship between classmates.

b) The Theme of Love to your Country by Appreciating the Contributions of the National Figures

The result of the analysis found that 100% of the respondents agreed that the appreciating the contribution of the Nations's heroes activity helps to nurture the love for their country among the participants.

Respondent 1:

We had to complete a task by making references on the contributions made by Malaysian heroes. By doing this, we are able to appreciate their contributions and strengthen our love for Malaysia.

Respondent 4:

We were able to learn more about the national figures who had contributed greatly to our country. This activity helps us to appreciate their contributions more and increase our love to the country.

Respondent 7:

We were able to learn more about the national figures and their contributions to the country. By showing appreciation to their contributions, it helps us to be more loving to our own country and homeland.

Respondent 9:

Through this activity, we were able to identify the various challenges faced by the national figures in order to protect our country. Thus, this activity helped us to appreciate our country even more.

Respondent 13:

Challenges faced by the national figures in their effort to build our country were very difficult. Hence, as a citizen, it is our responsibilities to protect our country as a symbol of appreciation towards their effort.

c) The Theme of Learning New Culture and Lifestyle of other Races through the ‘Mangunatip’ Dance

The result of the analysis showed that 80% of the respondents agreed that through the ‘Mangunatip’ dance activity; they were able to learn more about other races’ culture.

Respondent 2:

This activity gave us the opportunity to experience the culture of other races.

Respondent 5:

Through this traditional dance, we were able to learn about the culture and lifestyle of other races.

Respondent 8:

We were fortunate to be able to experience the culture of other races and this is a very fun activity.

Respondent 10:

This activity showed us a very interesting traditional dance. It helps us to experience some culture of other races in Malaysia.

Respondent 11:

By performing the traditional dance, our group which comprises of people from different races was able to work together in order to learn about a new culture and it was very fun.

Respondent 15:

This is our first time trying this dance, and it was very memorable.

d) The Theme of Creating the Intellectual Competency and Critical Thinking of Students through Building Game.

The result of the analysis found that 80% of the respondents agreed that through the building game, they were able to improve their intellectual competency and critical thinking skills.

Respondent 1:

The building activity allowed us to think critically and creatively. It also taught us to appreciate other people's perspectives and helped us improve our friendship. For example, we built three bridges which connect three different structures to represent the unity of our group that consists of the three different main races in Malaysia.

Respondent 5:

In order to build a structure that represents the three main races in Malaysia, we need to think creatively and innovatively. The activity was very tiring and challenging, but it was also very fun and enjoyable.

Respondent 6:

The intellectual competency and critical thinking skills were shown when we were required to create a building that symbolizes the three main races in Malaysia. Each group members contributed excellent ideas in designing and creating this structure.

Respondent 9:

Critical thinking and innovation skills can be improved among students during this activity. This is because each component or parts of the structure has to bring a meaning. Most importantly, the building created has to somehow symbolize the three main races in Malaysia.

Respondent 12:

This activity gave us the opportunity to share our ideas in a creative and innovative way. This building design shows that we are united and worked together to complete the task.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, the majority of the participants agreed that the 2i Camp program had affected them positively. The program has exposed the students to the multi-cultural education system within the higher learning institutes. Through this program, participants of different backgrounds or races were encouraged to communicate and interact with one another. On top of that, the sense of belonging to the nation can also be instilled among the students. Moreover, students or participants are able to learn to appreciate other races' cultures and lifestyles while sharpening their intellectual and critical thinking skills.

Thus, the step taken by the lecturers of Sunway University in organizing the 2i Camp for the students was a very proactive move in their effort to instill interest towards TITAS among the students. This is due to the exposure through the cultural and historical modules in the program which allow the students to self-experience the cultures and lifestyles of other races and ethnics. Besides that, experience-based learning focuses more on the needs and demands of the students as compared to theoretical learning.

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