

TEACHING AND LEARNING APPROACHES THAT INTRIGUING ORANG ASLI STUDENTS' INTERESTS IN SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

The aim of conducting this research is to identify the teaching and learning approaches that could be appealing to the Orang Asli students in school. This research is a qualitative research that showcases the elements in the approaches of both teaching and learning that could give positive impacts towards the passions and/or interests of the students, especially from the motivation aspects, of how they give high participation of learning in class. This research was focusing among the majority of Semai's Orang Asli elementary school children. It involved 2 layers with 12 interviews among the experienced teachers who had previously dealt with other Orang Asli people around Tapah, Perak and Cameron Highland, Pahang. The research participants were chosen based on their experiences in teaching the Orang Asli students for more than 3 years. Both schools are elementary schools that have the most Semai's Orang Asli children as students. The findings of this research have shown that the main element that needed to be focus in order to attract the Orang Asli students' interests in school are based on the hands-on learning, outdoor learning activities as well as the learning which involves edutainment. The findings of this research too have given impact on the development of educational curriculum by strategizing more effective approaches in understanding the teaching and learning approach among the students of Orang Asli people.

Keywords: Teaching and Learning, Orang Asli People, Edutainment, Outdoor Learning Activities

INTRODUCTION

In order to achieve the best quality of Malaysia's mission and vision, a variety of transformations in the Malaysian education systems have occurred. According to the Pelan Induk Pembangunan Pendidikan (PIPP) 2012, the Ministry of Education Malaysia has made a policy to bridge the gap between the students' ability in education with the location they live in and their local socioeconomics (Marzuki, Mapjabil & Zainol, 2014). There were many continuous attempts have been made by the government to fill in the gap between both city and rural students, as well as the attempts on increasing participations among the children of the Orang Asli people to attend school. However, the recent drop and the absent rates among the Orang Asli children have constantly worries the government (Ahmed et al., 2012; Mustapha, 2014; Kamarulzaman & Osman, 2008; Sharifah Md Nor et al., 2011; Thanabalan, Siraj & Alias, 2014; Wahab, Ahmad, Jelas, Rahman & Halim, 2014). The research was conducted to find out and identify the effective teaching and learning methods and approaches that could attract the Orang Asli students to go to school. Based on the research objectives, following research questions have been developed to guide the research:

- a) How are the involvements of the indigineous students in class?
- b) What are the elements in teaching and learning approaches that drives the indigenuous students' interests to go to school?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Upon achieving the nation's insights, the government has never marginalized the Orang Asli people in Malaysia. Multiple government agencies have worked together with the Ministry of Education Malaysia as well as the Affairs Department of the Orang Asli People of Malaysia (*Jabatan Hal Ehwal Orang Asli Malaysia*) to cope with these issues (Hanafi, Ahmad & Ali, 2014). There are several factors that contributes to the Orang Asli people's academic achievements, such as economic aspects (Al-Mekhlafi et al., 2011; Hanafi et al., 2014; Khor & Zalilah, 2008; Talib & Muslim, 2007; Thevakumar, 2016), individual personality (Hanafi et al., 2014; Talib & Muslim, 2007), family (Hanafi et al., 2014; Haslinah, 2009; Tamiah, Zanisah & Rusalina, 2015), community (Al-Mekhlafi et al., 2011; Mohd Nazri, 2014; Tambiah, Zanisah & Rusalina, 2015; Wong & Abdillah, 2017), geographic (Hanafi et al., 2014; Mohd Nazri, 2014), well-being (AL-Delaimy et al., 2015) and nutrition (AL-Mekhlafi et al., 2011; Haslinah, 2009; Law, Norhasmah, Gan & Nasir, 2018; Mohamad Johdi Salleh, Norul Khairiah, Nur Awanis, Nurul Huda & Siti Aisyah, 2009; Khor & Zalilah, 2008; Talib & Muslim, 2007; Wong, Zalilah, Chua, Norhasmah & Nur'Asyura, 2015).

For their survival needs, most Orang Asli people are still depending on their natural environment as their financial sources and places for them to spend their leisure time. Hence, if they were being introduced with the curriculum and pedagogy (of learning) which are unsuitable with their interests, or if they are unrelated with their daily lives, these could be one of the reasons for them to be less interested to study or to focus in class (Haslinda, Lilia & Zanaton, 2015). In the research conducted by Wan Afizi et al. (2014) in Kelantan, he discovered that the numbers of the Orang Asli children to school are quite worrying as some of them were reported to be absent for a month. The reason was that the students were needed to take care of their younger siblings as their parents went for work. Some of the students were reported to be working with their parents in the forest to make a living. These factors are the reasons of why the students are not able to keep up in their studies according to the lesson plans taught in school.

As a fact, the number of Orang Asli students' absentees were not interested in participating in neither activities nor academic plans in school as they would rather prioritize their cultural programs and socioeconomics such as Orang Asli Festivals and/or Fruit Festivals, as the students could earn money from those activities instead (Mat Ali, Abdul Rahman & Che Abd Rahman, 2012; Talib & Muslim, 2007; Wan Afizi et al., 2014). In their opinions, a modern school system is not the same and compatible with their environments. As for the new Orang Asli students who just set foot in school, they felt awkward with the new environment that are different from their cultural values'. For these Orang Asli children, their living environments are their school, whereas their parents and families are their teachers. The Orang Asli people are known as a timid community. They were reported to have lack in self-esteem, less durable on challenges, and have little exposure with the outside world. These are the factors that have made them less sociable with outsiders (Mohamad Johdi Salleh et al., 2009; Rohayu & Noor Sharipah, 2013; Talib & Muslim, 2007).

These kind of attitudes and personalities have influenced on how the Orang Asli students behaved and involved in schools.

Due to frequent absences, most Orang Asli students are found to be left out far behind the others. In a study on Orang Asli people that was done by Mohamad Johdi Salleh et al. (2009) in Pahang and Selangor, they have discovered that the in-class activities that involves teaching and learning concept by the teachers, could lead the Orang Asli students to boredom and being uninterested. The students were said to be able to maintain their focus for as long as the first 15 minutes. After that, they'll be distracted by teasing other students in class, or even running around and making noises even though the teachers is still around. Hence, the teaching would be hard to be executed formally. According to them, these Orang Asli students are more interested on the learning sessions that involves fun approaches and requires lots of movements rather than only thinking.

According to the statistics by the Malaysia Education Blueprint (*Pelan Pembangunan Pendidikan Malaysia*) 2013-2015, if we were to compare the average national academic achievements, the level of the Orang Asli students' achievements would be quite low as their dropout rates in schools are high. The national statistics have also shown that only 30% of Orang Asli students graduated from high schools. These rates are lower than half of the overall national rates in 72%. The statistics reported that almost 61% of Orang Asli students passed the core subjects in Primary School Evaluation Test (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah*), as to compare to the average national rates, which is 87%. As for the school levels, it was reported that 35% of the Orang Asli schools were in lower band of school achievements (Band 6 & 7) as to compare to the normal-typed schools, which recorded to be only 1% of the low band.

Other researchers have started to show their interests on several studies on the developments of curriculum model that includes other researches on teaching and learning towards the Orang Asli students. Previous scholars have conducted researches in terms of the developments of curriculum model for the Orang Asli students that based on nutritious garden (Siti Farhah, 2016; Siti Farhah & Saedah Siraj, 2015; Siti Farhah, Saedah, Zaharah, Nurul Ain & Nurul Izzah, 2017). While Aniza Mohd Said (2015) studied the curriculum that were based on herbs for the Orang Asli people. Mohd Nazri (2014) did a survey on the approaches of homeschooling on the Orang Asli people while Thabalan (2014) did a research on pedagogy models for the Orang Asli people in Malaysia.

According to the Bandura's Social Learning Theory, the theory explains on children's behaviors which are influenced by 3 main factors: personal (cognitive), behavior (skills) and environment (environmental support) (Bandura, 1986). In the social learning theory, Wood and Bandura (1989) explained that human's behavior is entirely motivated and controlled by continuous trainings on self-influenced. Generally, Bandura had also analyzed and understood about the thoughts, motivations and human's reactions that were shown in the theory in shaping the education programs (Gaines, & Turner, 2009; Izumi et al., 2013; Lewis, Sims, & Shannon, 1989; Lopez, 1999; Morris et al., 2002; Najimi, & Ghaffari, 2013; Ratcliffe, 2007; Reynolds et al., 1999; Siti Farhah, 2016). Bandura (1994) also saw the abilities and self-efficacy in the cognitive social as one of the social relationships that led to someone's trusts towards their abilities on influencing the situations that could give them impacts. As for example, an individual could have the confidence and motivations to achieve their goals either in their academic and/or any other desired fields.

Meanwhile in the Orang Asli students' learning contexts, they needed high self-efficacy through their environments that could bring them knowledge as well as a meaningful and useful understanding.

Furthermore, in Orang Asli society, they are very well known with their cultural and customary possessions. They are very close to the entertainment culture; variety of practical activities that have been permeated into their children. The Orang Asli children are much influenced and surrounded by influential models such as parents, friends and communities in their ethnicity that make them easy to learn and to imitate what is observed and what is to be believed day by day. This also affects the acquisition of learning in schools that is easy for them to engage with the elements of entertainment and practical activities. They consider this approach very closely with themselves and their souls. Social Learning Theory by Bandura has led to the exploration of this study.

Therefore, this research will explain more from the teachers' perspectives about the approaches of teaching and learning that have tendencies to attract the Orang Asli students' interests in school. In addition, this research will give impact towards the growth of curriculum in pedagogy as well as the teaching and learning strategies to generate more effective concepts of understanding and knowledge among Orang Asli students in Malaysia. Hence, in handling the issues of academic achievements and dropouts in their studies, a better specialize curriculum approaches are needed. The new curriculum is expected to attract the Orang Asli students' interests and passions to go to school.

METHODOLOGY

In this research, a qualitative methodology has been used to collect data and the information of the participants. Few qualitative procedure techniques were conducted such as 2 layers interviews with the teachers and observations on the students at the selected schools. In this research, the related students' information in school were obtained from the teachers. The samples were chosen among teachers who have experiences in teaching the Orang Asli students of more than 3 years. This is important as to help the researchers obtained information about the response and elements that are needed by the Orang Asli students while they are in class and school.

Researchers have used semi-structured interview techniques, i.e. by interviewing the experienced teachers that have taught more than 3 years in two Orang Asli Schools in Tapah, Perak and Cameron Highland, Pahang. Researchers interviewed the related participants about the Orang Asli students' involvement in the classroom. They were also been interviewed on how the teachers' pedagogy in the approaches on teaching and learning have that fascinated the students in schools. The interview protocols were built and confirmed by two experts in order to obtain legit information.

ANALYSIS

In answering the two research questions, the researchers have summarized the themes accordingly as listed. Thematic analysis was done through several processes. Final themes were developed after several layers of process and revisions using manual data familiarisation and data coding. The final themes also being verified by the expert to increase the trustworthiness of the findings.

PARTICIPATIONS IN CLASS

Based on the analysis from the participants that involved in both outside and in the classroom programs, the teachers could distinguish the difference of involvements by the Orang Asli students if compared if they were in the classroom. Their focuses were easily distracted from what was taught in the class when facing less interesting pedagogy.

Their boredom will be visible in the class when they were not active, and this has led them to be distracted such as:

They like to chew... oddly, they'll eat anything that was in their hands. For example, eraser. They'll chew erasers. Sometimes, they'll even chew rubber bands that they found on the floor (Participant 3)

In my opinion, when we were teaching in class, they would definitely show if they are bored. However, if we took them out of the class, we could clearly see that they were having fun. For example, the Year 6 students, we have conducted few programs after they finished their examinations (UPSR)—one of it was to plant vegetables. The happiness on their faces was clearly shown. Of course.. they are accustomed to the activities in their daily lives (Participant 7)

APPROACHES ON TEACHING AND LEARNING THAT DRIVES THEIR INTEREST TO GO TO SCHOOL.

Hands-on based learning (practical) and outdoor learning activities

Based on the interview analysis from the participants, majority of the teachers in both schools gave the same opinions about the approaches that could catch Orang Asli students' interest on studying in schools. These Orang Asli students are prone to activities that involves hands-on practical such as the learning approaches that involve them to do things immediately. They display their likeness on activities that allow them to manipulate ingredients (that were brought by their teachers) on their own experiences.

P₂ thought that the students are prone towards learning activities that include doing and moving that are called kinaesthetic learning. The students will focus more if the learning processes they received are something that they could use to build their own experience and that involves a lot of movements in an activity.

I think in the Orang Asli schools, things like these are something that we should focus more rather than academic. They couldn't focus on academics, they tend to like fun things such as the kinaesthetic learning.. (Participant 2)

P₁₀ also told about how the way these Orang Asli students learned through movements had helped them to gain knowledge and understanding on certain things.

As for example.. If we gave them a series of picture illustrations, then we asked them to demonstrate how to hold something. To make them understand, we asked the entire students to rise. We as teachers are the one who should show them on how it works. Haa.. they liked the method a lot. Because they can move around. I observed if there were other teachers that did the same—activities that includes movements, that involves movements around the class or outside, it shown that they had fun. They won't feel bored or tired. (Participant 10)

In addition, teachers of P₈ and P₉ agreed that the Orang Asli students liked to be taught when the teachers used any teaching and learning approaches based on the practical activities, i.e. the hands-on. They thought that these students need to try and make something in the process for them to understand a concept. If they were to be taught merely by verbal from the teachers, they will be a bit slow to process and to imagine or even to understand things they have learned.

Aah, what I have observed was, these practical activities are very important.. As a teacher, we should have not rely only on theories to make them understand. They are slow to imagine things that we taught. So, we as a teacher, we have to include ways on making things. These students love to try. From what I've seen, when there were practical activities, perform hands-on in the classroom and/or outdoor, they were more likely to understand better. They will also know what they had to do... (Participant 8)

P₉ also observed the positive impacts on the Orang Asli students' studies when the other teachers tried to apply their learning concepts that incorporate playfulness.

What I've noticed was when the students were learning in class, they will start to put on their bored face. In my case, the mathematic subject. To avoid them to be bored and 'blur', I had to do some activities. The difference was obvious. If we include a playful concept while studying, we could see the positive effects on the students—they could understand things better, they could interact with their friends in the subjects. At times, they would practice those activities after class. That's the effect. We as teachers are also glad and happy. Yes.. Teachers must be active in thinking and planning on the next activities in class. But if it could bring more positivity, it is worth it. Practical activities are needed in a great number. It's just, there are some of the teachers that fonder of doing it outside of the class than inside. (Participant 9)



Figure 1: Figure shows fun learning activities that interested them.



Figure 2: Figure shows students engagement in activities that involve practical activities.

Besides that, the students gave a great response when asked about the activities done outside of the classroom. The teachers claimed that the Orang Asli students have shown high interests on attending school if there's outdoor activities involve on the day. These are their only attractions to make them enjoy studying and staying at school.

P₁, P₄ and P₅ teachers from elementary school in Tapah, Perak stated that the Orang Asli students do show high interests on outdoor activities. For example, P₁ said that the students prefer towards activities that are rough and more physical challenging.

These Orang Asli children, if we tell them that there would be a camp tomorrow for an instant, they will be excited. There would be lots of questions asked. Such as, time of arrival, the proper attire, the people that going to attend the program, etc. As expected, if these kinds of activities to be done and apply in school, their everyday attendances would be almost full. They are comfortable with their environments, so when we spoke about camping, everyone would imagine on various activities such as gardening, trekking. Yeah, they learnt those from their parents anyway... (Participant 1)

P₄ and P₅ also claimed that the Orang Asli students prefer to be outside of the classroom than inside the classroom.

They (the students), can't do everything that we asked while in class. We asked them to read, they weren't interested though they could have. But, when we did the activity outside of the classroom, to read and story-telling, they would focus and be more passionate on the reading. Even sometimes there were some students that are still spell-and-read, they really did put their effort on that reading/story. (Participant 4)

Aah.. There are no problems when it comes to outdoor activities. But, if we give them school assignments and/or homework to be done at home, we couldn't afford to expect everything would be done. So, what I did was I gave them only a question. And if we do activities such as treasure hunting, they would be thrilled. (Participant 5)

According to P₅ teacher, based on his experience when handling the outdoor activities, he could sense the excitements in the Orang Asli students when participating in such activities. For example,

After their examinations (UPSR), we would conduct outdoor activities in their leisure time at school. Just because we had stressed too much on academic... We decided to did activities such as.. cooking. The activity had gotten lots of participations even for the boys.

They (the students) like to experiment things. As for the girls, when it comes to cooking, they acted and think like their mothers in the kitchen. Meanwhile, the boys would take their thoughts deeper like cooking in the forest. They loved it. As for the teachers, we needed to be reminded to control the situation. Because, they'll get overly excited in participating outdoor activities. (Participant 5)

From the researchers' perspectives, the Orang Asli students do prefer outdoor and tough activities. For instance, the students would take chance playing football on the field after school hours. The activity isn't only played by the boys but the girls too. They would appear to be more energetic and lively on field if to compare with their situations in the classroom.



Figure 3: Student's engagement on the outside classroom activities.

Interest on edutainment activities

Throughout the interviews and observations with the teachers, teachers of P₂, P₄, P₈, and P₁₁ agreed that these Orang Asli students are more prone to edutainment activities apart from both practical activities and outdoor activities. Edutainment is a learning that based on entertainments such as music and singing.

They tend to like more towards music. Musical Festivals are their passions. Like the older days, we too love music. So, it would be a hit if we organize music festivals or sports as such, in school. (Participant 2)

Teacher of P₄ added that the concept of singing in school has also taken the interest of the students. They are the one whom will work hard in participating in any entertainment activities that held by school.

P&P, they enjoy the edutainment methods. They are more interested in fun learning such as singing. They knew the songs that we have just heard way before. They'll even memorize the lyrics of the song. They know they have tv in their houses. With this information, some of us teachers will change few learning topics and/or subjects in a form of a song. The Orang Asli students love songs. What we did was, we chose a song and asked them to come up with their own lyrics. Then, we'll check their grammar and sentences in the right order as well as their spellings. From there, they'll start to learn. Besides, teaching aids must be colorful. And one more thing, we have to prepare gifts in conducting class activities. That way, they'll try to fight to answer the questions, even the hardest. The concept of fun learning or edutainment is helping for the students to be more interested on their studies. (Participant 4)

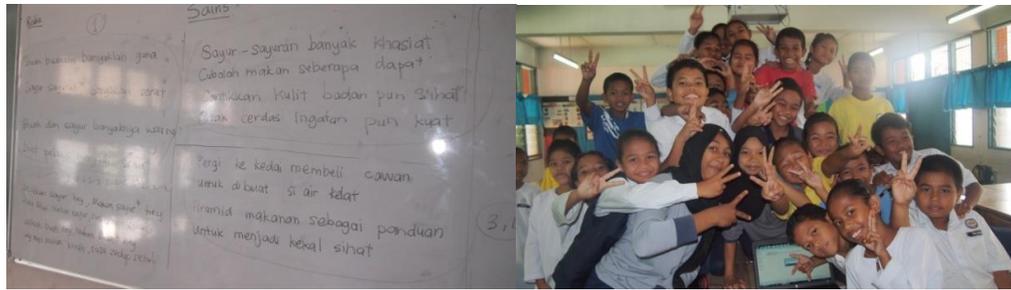


Figure 4: The excitement faces during singing a conversion song of "Rasa Sayang"

For the non-Muslim Orang Asli students, both P₈ and P₁₁ explained that it has been a norm for the Christians to preach by singing. Hence, it is possible that these Orang Asli students are more into singing in their lives.

The Christians... They like to preach through singing. That's what made them love things that include singing. When in class, they'll be more fascinated by activities that include singing, far different from getting focus in class. (Participant 8)

The students, they'll love it if we do p&p through songs. They'll completely enjoy it. When we brought them to the computer lab, they would try restarting the monitors. Of course, we have to guide them through all the programs that we have in the computer... (Participant 11)

In conclusion, the researchers could conclude that in the developments of pedagogy in teaching and learning aspects of the classroom, the teachers are responsible to emphasize more on curriculums that are more prone towards the outdoor learning approaches, either formally or not. These are to intrigue the Orang Asli students' interests on studying that could give them useful and meaningful experiences. These kinds of approaches could enable the students to be fully involved in both teaching and learning methods. The outdoor learning programs such as gardening, cooking and treasure hunting, etc, were one of the effective efforts to integrate inside their formal learning to boost knowledge, skills and to change their attitude towards teaching and learning in school.

Apart, the edutainment or learning approaches that included singing and entertainments are needed to be emphasized in school's curriculum. Edutainment is one of the learning approaches that is more fun and interesting as it contains few elements that could entertain people with humour, aesthetic, music or sounds, acting and etc. (Mohd Zahar & Affero Ismail, 2016). This could help to motivate the students and to stimulate their sense of hearing and creative thinking.

DISCUSSION

Based on the research done towards the teachers of the Orang Asli students, it is found that the most important elements or the main constructs that needed to be emphasized and applied in the curriculum is to analyse the necessity aspects of the meaningful approaches on the Orang Asli students. One of the approaches that was highlighted by the teachers to gain the Orang Asli students' interests in the classroom was the teaching and learning approaches that were based on hands-on practical and outdoor activities. The aim in identifying the strengths of these students'

learning process is to strengthen the existing pedagogy and the learning approaches towards the Orang Asli students. This is important in achieving the nation's education goals and philosophies in bridging the gap among the minority students. The Orang Asli students from both schools were found to be prone towards hands-on activities which involve teaching and learning approaches that practically includes the students to manipulate teaching aids with their own experiences. The hands-on activities in the classroom are one of the approaches that allows the teachers to create a mutual understanding with the students by using all the senses that later could stimulate their brain to generate new paths on storing information (McMullen, Kulinna & Cothran, 2014).

Several researches on Orang Asli communities have been done to support the facts that the Orang Asli students would be easier to study if they are to expose with real environments where knowledge and skills learnt could be practically applied and implicated (Hartini, 2011; Haslinda et al., 2015; Ibrahim & Ahmad Sapawi, 2008). In this study, the students would give half of their attentions on their studies in class if the learning process could make them move or stimulate them into creating and making things to make them to understand better both in knowledge and experiences concepts among themselves. These Orang Asli students have flaws on imagination process and ability to understand any learning concepts if they are been taught only through verbal.

Besides the hands-on activities, the students have shown to be passionate and eager on teaching and learning approaches outside of the classroom whether through formal or informal. In the students' perceptions of learning, the outdoor activities or outside of the classroom activities are the teaching and learning approaches that are been conducted outside of the range of a classroom. The environments could also be a place for them to gain experience apart from learning in class. Hence, the outdoor activities have taken the interests of Semai's Orang Asli students to come to school. This was supported by Ligon, Awang, Ahmad, Hamzah and Hasan (2017) on the outdoor learning concepts are well accepted among the Orang Asli community as it helped them to understand better on concepts that they have learnt.

Another finding in the research also shows that the Orang Asli students especially the Semai Orang Asli ethnic, were more engaged in singing and entertainment. Their passions in edutainment learning approaches have made them more attentive in participating in activities. Some of the previous researchers (Haslinda et al., 2015; Talib & Muslim, 2007; Yusoff & Hayati, 2009) who had explored on Orang Asli cultures have found out that they were more likely to enjoy things that are loosen up and relaxed such as entertainment. In fact, according to the research from Perak's Orang Asli people community, they often celebrate the fruit seasons with dance festivals 'sewang' and feast whenever they had enough hunt goods to be shared among themselves (Siti Aminah & Seow, 2013; Talib & Muslim, 2007). It turns out that they dedicated their culture with entertainment and it was proven to influence students' passions and interests to achieve a level of satisfaction on learning this method. Thus, the elements in this pedagogy, are required to be centered in a specialized curriculum for all Orang Asli students so that they would have meaningful and useful values in the aspects of their education and knowledge that they will gain.

CONCLUSION

Many researches have been done as initiatives to increase academic achievement while reducing the gap among Orang Asli students. Thus, this study has led to the exploration of teaching and learning approaches that intriguing Orang Asli students' interests in school.

This study finds two major implications which are implication on theory and practice in which the implications for the theory can help to develop a customized curriculum specifically in terms of teaching strategies for the better process of learning among Orang Asli children. The findings also involved implications on practices such as the implications of the Malaysian Ministry of Education, teachers, Orang Asli parents, JAKOA, Orang Asli children and contributions to knowledge. Further studies can be replicated and expanded in studying and designing a curriculum model for other ethnics of Orang Asli and minorities.

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