Social Intelligence of the Indigenous Pupils

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Abstract: This study is to determine the level of social intelligence competency of the indigenous pupils. A survey was done by using a set of questionnaire. The instrument was built based on the Social Intelligence Theory by Tony Buzan. The sample consisted of 150 Year six (6) indigenous pupils. Samples were selected using cluster random sampling method which involved five schools from five districts in the state of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The questionnaire was divided into two parts consisted of items to determine the level of social intelligence competency from two aspects: personal competency and interpersonal competency. The interpersonal competency test was divided into three aspects: communication, interaction and collaboration. A pilot test was conducted and the Alpha Cronbach reliability value found was high to all constructs with the mean scores between .875 to .876. The data was analyzed using descriptive (frequency, mean and standard deviation) technique of the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS-15). The findings showed that the level of social intelligence competency was high. Thus, in the case of the indigenous pupils, there is a potential to develop their competencies to the optimum. Thus, this study is valuable in providing baseline data in planning social intervention programs for a total potential development of the pupils.

Key words: Indigenous Pupils, Social Intelligence, Personal and Interpersonal Competency.

Introduction and Background:

The concept of diversity is focused in the national education policy. The orientation of diversity in education refers to a wide concept and range of capabilities. This concept encompasses many different aspects of intelligence, race and ethnic groups. Thus, in discussing student diversity in Malaysia, it involves the idea of participation of students from the aboriginal tribes.

In addition, students’ abilities should be assessed on various aspects. Assessment which is based on cognitive capacity, academic and intelligence means is no longer a matter of importance (Buzan 2002; Goleman 1995, 1999; Segal and Jaffe 2008; Panju 2008). According to Panju (2008), the concept of diversity is also seen at a different angle of capability and the ability of social and emotional intelligence. In the context of the aboriginal students, the indigenous pupils or commonly known as Orang Asli in Malaysia, the concept of achievement is also seen on the positive aspects of the formation and development of a student in terms of maturity and social competency.

The indigenous community is experiencing a social change to enable them to participate actively in the mainstream. Education is the basic platform to boost social mobility among the indigenous peoples. Social mobility of the people is not an impossible scenario as there are many efforts and implementations of basic education programs to uphold the democratic concept of education and education for all, in line with the idea of UNESCO (1994). Dewey (1974) talked about the importance of mixing and socialization of students as an important educational tool. According to Dewey, through socialization (or referred to by Dewey as the intermeangling) and communication in schools, students will learn about responsibility of himself and others.

Accordingly in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has initiated integrated education policies related to the concept of inclusive education involving the diversity of students. The concept of student diversity is not limited to the integration of education for children with special needs, it includes the diversity of student backgrounds, including ethnic and cultural diversity. Based on the policy, children of aboriginal people is also included in education mainstream.

There are various matters related to social intelligence to be explored. This is where the researcher looked at the importance for the profile of social intelligence competency level of the indigenous pupils in Malaysia. The research is to enable researcher to do the initial deduction of the concept of student diversity. A set of data obtained from the questionnaire enabled the researcher to determine the level of social intelligence competencies and how it became an element of diversity in mainstream schools. Two key aspects of social intelligence competencies under study are 1) personal competence to socialize, and 2) three aspects of interpersonal competencies, namely: a) communication competency, b) competence to interact, and c) competence to collaborate.

In the context of indigenous particularly the indigenous people, the new generation is also going through rapid changes. They also need to learn quickly and efficiently on new skills, as well as self adjustment to
changes in technology and social phenomena. Hence, their competence must be identified to be included in the diversity of education policy. Thus, this research data is important, so that it can be generated through various approaches and efforts to provide better diversity education for the indigenous students.

This study is to attract the attention of many injustices that occur when the main focus of most of the schools are on academic progress, towards the achievement of the curriculum and standards, which to payless attention to the social and emotional development of students. On the other hand, issues related to social intelligence are becomeing increasingly important as the transformation of time has also changed a generation. The younger generation today, including the indigenous youths, are exposed to a variety of problems including social problems and issues related to self motivation. They need social intelligence competencies and a strong emotional strength to deal with any risks in life. Social intelligence competencies are extremely important, especially, when the career world and educational orientation of the current situation, require more teamwork, participation, and informal social groups

**Problem Statement:**
Diversity of students and their intelligence have resulted some achievement gaps. Based on the annual report and JHEOA (Department of Natives Affairs) media discussions, it was found that the level of socialization, socio-economic and social emotion of the indigenous communities have yet to develop properly. Statistics in 2007 showed that nearly 35 percent of indigenous students did not completing their secondary school education, and this rate increased to 39.05 in 2008 (JHEOA Annual Report 2009). In addition, the percentage of indigenous students pursuing higher education is still too small. Particularly, the enrolment to the mainstream secondary school is fewer than the rate of graduation or completion of studies in year 6 from the special indigenous primary schools.

Some findings from the literature review found that socialization problems among the indigenous are caused by their culture and instinct, the bonds of kinship and the fear to stay far away from family and worried about the new environment, poor self-concept, fear, shame and difficulty to socialize with other people (Ramlee et al., 2009; Abd. Razak et al., 2009). According Ramlee et al. (2009) and Abdul Razaq et al. (2009).

Based on the problems data, further study and analysis were needed to determine the indigenous students’ perspective and expectations on the high school environment in the areas of sociology, as school is a place of difference social and psychological aspects. The study on the socialization process and social competencies that influence students’ confidence and willingness to make the school transition in the long run will help to improve the experience of the students involved.

**Purpose of the Study:**
This study aims to identify and determine the level of social intelligence competencies of the indigenous pupils.

**Research Framework:**
This study is based on the theory of social intelligence (the power of social intelligence) developed by Tony Buzan (2002). Overall, this study identifies the social intelligence competencies of the indigenous pupils. This study determines the level of social intelligence by studying the sub-domains or sub-aspects of the social intelligence competencies. Results of the study, is then used to deduce the implications on the concept of students social diversity and inclusivity.

Knowledge on the level of social intelligence competencies will provide data that can be used in a variety of efforts to help the indigenous youths, particularly to perform more controlled social transition and positive adjustment in the current socialization in school. Thus, this database can be manipulated in planning policies and education development plans, especially for student diversity policy. The findings of this study will assist policy makers to identify areas that need to be prioritized and what strategies can be applied, particularly for the Orang Asli pupils.

**Literature Review:**
The concept of social intelligence was first written by Thorndike in 1973. The theory of multiple intelligence was introduced by Howard Gardner in 1983, followed by emotional intelligence, introduced by Salovey and Mayer in 1990, which was later popularized by Goleman in 1995. In general, social intelligence competencies involve maturity which allows one to establish good relations with others, to exhibit a positive attitude and behaviour when interacting with others and according to social norms in which the environment he is in.

Thus, academics began to recognize and put priority on the concepts and theories including soft skills and social intelligence in determining success in life (Goleman 1995). Social intelligence termed a stage in which the individual is able to adapt (get along) and in contact with other people around them (Buzan 2002). Since
human beings are "social animals" (Buzan 2002), and so social intelligence competencies are the forces that allow individuals to continue living and enjoying life.

In addition, many researchers and neuropsychological experts, had agreed that the social nature of learning and various cognitive elements are intertwined and based on the "relationship". Thus, it be concluded social and emotional competencies are fundamental to cognitive skills and learning (McCombs, 2004). According to Berk (2008), several studies found that social intelligence built from three main attributes - verbal competency, problem-solving competency and social competency. Many researchers and evolution theorists have speculated that each person has a unique pro-social capacity to act appropriately with strangers.

In 1983, Howard Gardner had discussed interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence in his book "Frames of Mind". According to Gardner, intelligence is not necessarily inherited, but it is influenced by culture, individual adaptation to the environment, access to education, nutrition, learning environment and other factors. Individuals learn to adapt to their own surroundings in the development of life (Nachiappan et al., 2009).

**Definition of Social Intelligence:**

Social intelligence is defined as the competency to understand the other person. Social competence can be measured tacitly or implied by asking someone to mark and determine the effectiveness of his ability to use various strategies to deal with any social scenario, whether at school or at work. According to McCombs (2004), this intelligence generally refers to the competency of self-confidence, knowing certain behaviour as expected by others, spontaneous desire; ability to take turns, follow directions, and the abilities to ask and adapt to others.

Based on the definition and concept of social intelligence, it can be concluded that it consists of a number of skills and competencies. According to McComb (2004), in the school context, it is actually a domain that focuses on others, to communicate personally and interpersonally as supported by the education system. Personal competency such as self-esteem refers to the ability of a person to put value on himself. Students who do not have a personal competency will always worry about certain things and have a negative perspective due to concerns over the risk or an occurrence that has not yet been identified.

In 1995, Daniel Goleman popularized the concept of social and emotional intelligence competencies which include social skills, personal qualities and self motivation. According to Goleman in his books "Emotional Intelligence" (1995) and "Working with Emotional Intelligence" (1998), that when a person is able to adapt to one another, then the individual is not only a social intelligence, but is actually has a good emotional level; in same time, individuals who have good emotional level will be easier to make adjustments in social interaction and life environment.

Individuals who are socially intelligent are primarily skilled in three psychomotor areas (Goleman 1995; 2000; Buzan 2000). The areas are, 1) understand own self (self efficacy), 2) understand the other person (empathy), and 3) competencies to address relationship. The most basic additional competencies are: a) the ability to have a one-to-one basis communication and interaction, in small groups and in the larger human groupings; b) having an attitude that would encourage others to communicate and make friends, and c) know how to make friends and maintain friendships. Other social competencies are having the ability to handle a conflict relationship, a good listener, comfortable when in a group or with others of different backgrounds, ages, cultures and social strata. However, the most important is the ability to make people relaxed and comfortable.

Tony Buzan (2002) introduced the Social Intelligence Theory. According to Buzan, social relation is "brain-to-brain communication", on which an individual has the ability to communicate with himself and manage to address the 'brain' of other people. Individual with this competency is considered as someone who is intelligent. According to Buzan’s social intelligence theory, someone who can communicate well with another person is considered intelligent because of the need to generate their brain and body to communicate and 'read' other people. Interestingly, this intelligence can be learned, nourished and developed through education or training (Gardner 1993; Harris 2007; Goleman 1995).

Some models and social learning theory view that social and moral behavior is developed by reinforcement and modeling. Many pro-social behaviors such as interaction and make friends, are learnt through modelling, observation and emulation. Children's physical development is in parallel with the development of their pro social and antisocial behaviours. Hawkins, Smith and Catalano (2004) have developed a theory of social development which combines the three theories of human development, namely: social learning theory, social control theory and the theory of difference. According to the theory, children learn about certain patent of behaviour through imitation to help them develop their own social competence.

When a child grows older, the child starts the conventional level of his social behaviour, which is important to continue not because of a personal desire to get rewards such as praise, but he believes that he should maintain his social system to ensure the occurrence of human relationships, especially with peers, to create social harmony and good social management. The number of school years helps a child to improve the understanding of social and moral learning. After long years of schooling, students are aware of the social diversity, they learn to practice appropriate attitude which driven by the spirit of humanity through interaction with peers and resulted in social changes and personal changes in themselves (Corrie 2003; Berk 2008; Wood 2009).
and Wood 2002; Nachiappan et al., 2009). So, mostly at the early age, young adolescents have proficient in many social behaviours (Corrie 2003; Berk 2008; Wood & Wood 2002). This means that the indigenous pupils had also gained control of their competencies in line with their increasing age and the socialization process in schools.

**Methodology:**

The Sample Consisted 150 Of Year Six (6) Indigenous Pupils. Samples Were Selected Using Cluster Random Sampling Method Which Involved Five Schools From Five Districts In The State Of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. The Quantitative Survey Data Was Collected Using Questionnaires As The Main Instrument To Get Information About Social Intelligence Competencies Of The Indigenous Pupils. Basic Construction Of The Instrument Is Based On Literature Sources From The Theory Of Power Of Social Intelligence By Buzan (2002) And Also The List Of Social Literature Adapted From The Social Intelligence Test Questions By Catherine Corrie (2003). The Questionnaire Was Then Modified To Suit The Scene And The Language Of The Indigenous Pupils. So, When Administered, The Items Were Constructed And Modified To Be More Easily Understood In Accordance With The Ability Of The Pupils. A Pilot Study Was Also Conducted To Determine The Reliability Of The Instrument. The Questionnaire Contains Four Main Aspects Which Are Personal Competency (Consists Of 6 Items Dealing With Students’ Personalities Such As Open Minded And Sociable), Communication Competency (Consists Of 15 Items To Be Tested On Students’ Communication Ability), Competency Of Interaction (Which Deals With Students’ Ability To Adapt In Such Environment) And Collaboration Competency (Where 6 Items Were Addressed To Discover Students’ Comfortability While Working With Others)

Inventory Of The Questionnaire To Measure Social Intelligence Competencies Contains 38 Items Divided Into Two Main Topics, Namely Personal Competency To Socialize As Well As Interpersonal Social Competency. Items To Measure Personal Competency Consists Of 6 Statements. The Items Have Been Built Based On The Literature Review Of Social Intelligence, Which Was Introduced By Buzan (2000) And Goleman (1994, 2000). The Cronbach Alpha For The Overall Social Intelligence Competencies Is 0.876. Item Correlation Value Indicates A Good Score Because At The Level Of > .20. These Values Implied That The Questionnaire Is Suitable To Be Used Against The Respondents To Measure The Level Of Competency. A Total Of 150 Questionnaires Were Distributed And Recollected. The Data Collected Was Analyzed Using Descriptive Statistics Such As Frequency (Frequency), Mean And Percentage.

**Finding and Discussion:**

Table 1: Social Intelligence Competency of Indigenous Pupils In Primary School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency</th>
<th>N =150</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation *</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Competency</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>844</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication Competency</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>0.52</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competency of Interaction</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration Competency</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVERAGE</strong></td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on the findings, it is found that the level of social intelligence competencies of the indigenous pupils is at the high level as a whole and in every aspect of the competencies - personal competency (mean = 3.58), communication competency (mean = 3.68) competency of interaction (mean = 3.82) and collaboration competency (mean = 3.79). These results prove that the public perception on the capabilities of the indigenous pupils is inaccurate. Despite the low results of tests on academic achievement and cognitive intelligence (IQ) it is proven that their social intelligence competencies found to be high, at least it can be shown by this study group. These results were obtained for the study of intelligence is viewed from the angle specified by Buzan (2002), Corrie (2003) and Nachiappan (2009) that it is a student's ability to process information independently in an effort to stay on in a social environment, and they are willing to comply to social norms, in order to solve problems in learning and life. Life problem in this context is the life of the pupils in a formal learning environment in schools. The finding is contrast with the previous research conducted by Abdul Razaq Ahmad and Zalizan Mohd Jelas (2009) which shown that almost all indigenous pupils in rural areas are less confident in motivation that caused the dropouts in schools.

This social competency is possible has been domeanated by the Year Six indigenous pupils because they already have a long experience of schooling. Beside that, activities in curriculum and co-curriculum provided by Meanistry of Education in Malaysia also contribute to the skills development among the indigenous pupils. Thus, they have mastered the essential social skills. This finding is in line with the opinions of the researchers and theorists of child development such as Berk (2008), Baldwin (1983), and Crain (1996) who argue that every child regardless of background indeed have a unique pro-social capacity against strangers and eventually they
become competent. This means that almost 6 years experience in the school has sufficiently give the pupils certain maturity and social intelligence to improve the level of their competency. This finding also strengthens the opinions of Berk (2008) that the number of schooling is one or the factors that improve the skills and social competency. According to Berk, the longer the period of school experience, the more social competencies that can be copied by students regardless of their social background and economic status. Thus, this finding has also proven the opinion of Bandura (1977), Hawkins, Smith and Catalano (2004) and Nachiappan (2009) that children learn to adapt themselves in their lifetime because of social behaviour can be studied and emulated.

Table 1 shows that competency of interaction score the highest of mean value compared to other aspects in social intelligence competencies. According to Ee Ah Meng (2005), cooperative and constructive learning concept as practice in Malaysian schools play the vital role in providing the optimum experience and encouraging students to interact. The finding is in line with Corrie (2003) and, Berk (2008) and Wood & Wood (2002) which mentioned that students are exposed to various aspects of interaction. Thus, peer contact itself contributes to social awareness and increases the ability of interaction among them.

The findings also show that the second highest social competency acquired by the indigenous pupils is in the aspect of collaboration competency. It is found that the pupils are capable to cooperate and actively involved in group activities. This finding is providing a differentview as compared to findings of previous researches conducted by Ramlee et al (2009) and Abdul Razaq et al (2009) which found that indigenous teenagers were a bit shy and timid. Thus, this research finding is prone to Berk (2008) and several other researchers of children social development. Many studies on children social development claimed that certain behaviours such as being shy and lack of social ability will be changed according to their ages and surroundings. To this end, the researcher is convinced that collaboration competency among the indigenous students has increased upon the six years of exposure at schools, and thus has helped in improving their social behaviours. This opinion is confirmed by McDevit and Ormrod (2004) which stated that concentration level will consequently increase with age, thus children are able to control their own attitude as their ages began to turn to 11 or 12 (early teenager).

It is also found that the aspect of communication competency is the third highest among all aspects of competencies studied. It is found that the pupils have a good listening skills as it is part of communication competency. Analysis on each of the sub communication competencies showed that even though the pupils have a good communication competency, it is only on non verbal communication. The findings also show that students’ abilities to present a speech and giving opinions in front of the class were at an average level. This statement was previously found by Ramlee et al (2009) and Abdul Razaq et al (2009) on lack of self confidence among the indigenous teenagers. Abdullah and Aimon (2002) and Madsen (2003) mentioned that people from the minority group or lower social status will face difficulty to point out their opinions or suggestions and ideas because they are lacking of power to influence others. This means that even though they have good ideas, they are unable to put forward due to the internal fear of being rejected.

From the table, it is proven that personal competency is the lowest competency among other competencies. Based on the analysis, the students are not really ready to socialize, especially with their friends from different races. The findings agree with Ramlee et al (2009) and Abdul Razaq et al (2009) which stated that the indigenous teenagers had difficulties in communication which came from their inner and personal factors.

Implications:

This study implies that each student has some differences. But their development is the same, it is just the pace which is different. The findings also imply that students’ personal development and competency is not static and it actually can be developed positively by the influence of social environmental. In addition, this study also implies that students have different social background, who need a caring attitude of teachers in the selection of teaching and learning approaches, to enable them to secure at least the basic competency.

The findings may provide information for social intervention programs and personal development of students, which should be different for different children or students who are different in social skills, ethnic and culture. Furthermore, the formation of a caring school culture can be produced through this research data. The main issue is the intervention program must aim to make a shift in attitude among educators, policy makers and the public, that in order to achieve the highest academic scores, the key is to create a competency in various aspects.

Implication on Teachers:

This study implies that schools and teachers play an important role not only on academic development, but the psychosocial development of students. Teachers in schools with the indigenous pupils should be trained and equipped with the knowledge and cross-cultural interpersonal skills, so that they can recognize, understand and to become familiar with the students beyond the academic dimension. This is because teachers who understand the psychosocial dimensions of the students will be aware of individual differences, they will ease the students to be out of fear which can help them to develop a positive perspective. Apart from that, these aspects will enable teachers to provide learning experiences that meet the needs for improving social and emotional
adjustment process of the students in the mainstream society. Intelligence must be assessed beyond the academic, because now the students can no longer be said to be intelligent and wise through a measure of excellence in the academic field.

**Implication to the Administrators:**

The school administrator or the administrators of the state education office should play a role as an agent planning to develop specific programs to help the indigenous students. To be more focused on the dimensions and social intelligence competencies. Negative perception must be corrected to the practice of activities that enable them to become more bold and confident when they are in the crowd. In addition, a general program need to be designed to be implemented in realization that there are different needs for different groups. This means that programs should be implemented to provide accurate and meaningful impact to improve the integration and social competencies of students.

**Conclusion and Recommendation:**

School learning environment is far different from the environment at home, it is important to understand the factors that influence students' perspective associated with the level of social intelligence. There must be a specific policy approaches and related balanced emphasis on academic achievement and also effective policy to meet the needs of learning, motivation, emotional and social diversity of individuals. Establishment of policies and approaches should go beyond academic achievement, but more to the achievement of development results, including improvement in emotional and social competencies, and also personality training to be a caring and socially responsible human being. The findings indicate that social factors are stable in this study. Indigenous pupils have no socialization problem at least in this study group. A strong social dimension of interventions will help students to become more successful and thus can reduce cases of premature termination so as to reduce the school dropout rate. The main implication of this study is the context of a broader education should be to create a culture and climate of schools with a mission beyond academic achievement, much to the development of social competency. In addition, schools must strengthen its role as an agent of social support. This means that, in the effort to maintain high standards of learning specific skills, we should not underestimate the students, as well as the process and learning environment that they follow. This is because apart from certificate, it is important to produce productive citizens.

**REFERENCES**


