THE EFFICACY OF ACTIVITIES TO INCREASE PUPILS PARTICIPATION IN CLASS

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ABSTRACT

Getting students to take part in classroom activities is really challenging for a teacher trainee. Without their active participation, learning objectives may not be achieved. Based on the preliminary observation and assessment, at least four pupils of Year 5 Kualiti in SK Padang Hiliran showed little to no interest in learning English. This is due to personal learning problem faced by the pupils such as Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) and low self-esteem. Three participants from Year 5 Kualiti, 2 males and 1 female were selected for this study. This research was conducted to improve their classroom participation through a set of activities chosen. The series of activities consist of three main parts, which are the "Running Dictation", "Last Man Standing" and "Find Someone Who". "Running Dictation" was conducted in the first cycle, while "Last Man Standing" was conducted in the second cycle and in the third cycle; "Find Someone Who" was conducted". The methods of data gathering used were document analysis through answer sheets and ongoing observations. After completing the whole cycle of activities, the pupils seemed to be engaged in the teaching and learning activity as it was a fun and meaningful lesson. Pupils have shown positive improvements compared to the initial observation.

Keywords: action research, inactive participation, primary school, English
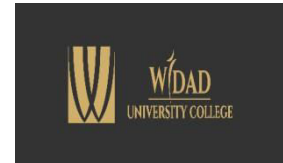
1 Introduction

1.1 RESEARCH FOCUS

Being a teacher trainee, I was given the chance to undergo a three-months-long practicum phase in SK Padang Hiliran, located in a sub-urban area in Kuala Terengganu. I then faced problems of my pupils not paying attention during the lesson. I was quite mad as I tried numerous ways to gain attention from the pupils but there were still pupils were attending their own matters during the Teaching and Learning (T&L) session . I found out that some of the Year 5 Kualiti pupils (20 boys and 4 girls) have learning problem such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and low self-esteem. ADHD is one of the most commonly diagnosed of children (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2015). The term attention deficit hyperactivity disorder refers to people who exhibit patterns of inattention, impulsivity and overactive behavior that restrict with their daily functioning (National Institute of Mental Health, 2016). Since the start of my practicum period, I have been informed that there was a pair of twins in the class that were medically-diagnosed with ADHD. It is obvious since the twins were showing signs of ADHD such as failing to follow my classroom procedure (e.g., ask for permission before going out from the class).

Since it is a class with 20 boys, the other 4 girls were having issues with their self-esteem as they were quite unresponsive and very passive throughout the lesson. It is an undeniable fact that self-esteem is an important academic construct in the process of education. Pupils with low self-esteem do not participate actively in the T&L session. Students with low self-esteem do not expose their skills or willingness to take part in the learning process actively. They also try to hide their unfavorable characteristics, which according to them are not liked by others (Iqbal Ahmad, Alam Zeb, Sekat Ulah, & Azghar Ali, 2013). By having high self-esteem, pupils will perform better in examinations and assessments as compared to those who acquire low self-esteem. (Mohammad Aryana, 2010). However, there are other variables which contribute towards self-esteem and increased rate of participation in learning activities by students such as, quality of family life, appreciation from teachers and parents, participation in co-curricular activities and positive peer relationship (Wiggins, Schatz, & West, 1994).

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A research objective is a clear, concise, declarative statement, which provides direction to the research activity (Dobie, 2012). It is also act as a main indicator, which refers to the extent of effectiveness and the success of the intervention.

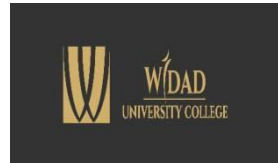Research questions are statements that identify the phenomenon to be studied.

Research objective:
To increase year 5 Kualiti pupils' participation in teaching and learning session.
Research questions:
1. Does conducting a series of activities manage to increase year 5 Kualiti pupils' participation in teaching and learning session?
2. How does a series of activities manage to increase year 5 Kualiti pupils' participation in teaching and learning session?

1.3 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Research participants refers to living individuals about whom an investigator conducting research obtains data through intervention or interaction with the individual or identifiable private information (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). The success and the diagnostic information regarding any form of intervention can only be obtained through data collected from research participants. This section discusses the participants chosen for this action research. The target group belongs to the class of year 5 Kualiti in Sekolah Kebangsaan Padang Hiliran, Kuala Terengganu, Terengganu. The participants are in a mixed ability class (intermediate-low) and display a low level of mastery in the English language.

Respondents were chosen based on their performance in class which all three of the respondents portrayed problematic behavior that interrupts teaching and learning session. Their main problem is observed during my early phase of practicum days at SK Padang Hiliran.

For this study, the participants consisted of two male and one female pupil. The following description about the participants is based on four main elements such as socio-

economic background, academic performance, personality and attitude. The identities of the participants are also classified and replaced with pseudonyms instead.

1.3.1   Research Participant 1

Syahada is a thin, tall girl. She is always tidy and neat. This is observed through her works. She weard ironed uniform and regularly makes sure that she looks clean and neat. Syahada has neat and beautiful handwriting as she is very particular about it. This can be seen as she writes slower than her other classmates. Hence, Syahada is one of the pupils who are always late at submitting work given by teachers. Syahada never showed any eagerness to learn English and preferred to stay silent in class even when being asked questions. She despise Listening and Speaking lesson as it would require her to communicate and mingle in class. Syahada is the eldest child in her family and comes from a low-income family, as her mother sells Terengganu's traditional kuoh "akok". Therefore, her academic performance is below satisfactory as she scored "E" in both of English papers in the recent mid-year examination. However, Syahada possess a very creative drawing skill. This can be seen in one of the activities as I conducted a Language Arts lesson to the pupils.

1.3.2   Research Participant 2

The second participant of this action research is Shahir. Shahir is an overweight boy. Shahir takes good care of his hygiene. He is a very helpful pupil. This can be seen as Shahir is always be the first pupil to volunteer if any teachers asked the pupils to help. He always tried his best to assist teachers bringing teaching aids to class. However, his academic performance was below satisfactory. Shahir always be seen trying to participate in the lesson even if he lacked in understanding instructions in English. Shahir hates to be paired with his twin-brother. He would display signs of objections and aggressiveness if he was put into the same group as his twin brother. Shahir is an active boy, and it can be seen as he would show signs of disinterest if there were no physical activities were involved. Shahir's father works as a policeman and currently staying at the police's quarters, while his mother is a housewife. Shahir loves going to school, unlike his twin brother. However, in general, both of the twin brother often skipped school, especially on Thursdays.

1.3.3   Research Participant

The final participant of this research is Shakir. Shakir is about the same size as Shahir. Shakir is a neat boy, always trying to make sure that he wears an ironed uniform. Shakir hates it when his shirt or pants get dirty. Shakir has a messy handwriting, but still can be read. Shakir displayed no interest in learning English Language as he finds it is hard to learn. He always refuses to participate in activities and did not submit homework that was given to him. He is a quite naughty boy, as he was mentioned several times in teachers' meeting due to his misbehavior. Shakir can be quite rude at times to his classmates. He can be quite a bully. Although Shakir has been given counseling by teachers, he still refuses to do homework and disrupts teaching and learning session by suddenly hitting his friends. Both Shahir and Shakir scored an "E" for both English papers in mid-year examination.

2   Literature review

Every child has something that they find exciting or interesting. Pupils with ADHD usually do not complete the task given. Malaysia primary teachers generally have negative attitudes towards the placement of children with special educational needs in mainstream classes and they are of the view that the structure of primary schooling will need to change in order to support the implementation of inclusive education (Haniz Ibrahim, 1998). Malaysia's primary school teachers did view the matter (inclusive education) in a positive way, however they expressed concern about the lack of teacher skills in the aria and they also voiced out a negative view of children with disabilities and their families (Bailey, Tubpun, & Nomanbhoy, 2015). A professional teacher however should improve him/herself to address these shortcomings. However, given the fact that there is a lack of sufficient teacher educator in this area, so it seems likely that the government's aim of implementing inclusive education would still be a distant goal.

3   Methodology

Data collection is very vital in any field of study. It is the process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest in a systematic manner which enables researchers to answer the research question set in a study (Lyon & Chhabra, 2004). In an academic writing, there are many types of data collection methods which can be adopted.
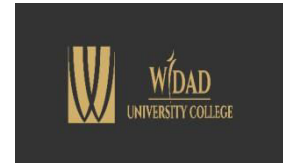
When the need of data collection arises, it is first important to decide on the best methods that can be carried out as this practice promises a more focused and systematic study.

3.1 Types of Data

3.1.1 Document Analysis

Document analysis is an important source of information of any study conducted. It refers to the various procedures involved in analysing and interpreting data generated from the examination of documents and records relevant to a particular study (Vendler, 2011).

This data collection method was practiced through the examination of work produced by the participants of this study. Instruments used were worksheet, photographs and reflective journal.

3.1.1.1 Worksheet

I identified the main problem as I handed out worksheet for the pupils to work on. I handed a blank A4 paper as I was teaching Language Arts skill (Unique Buildings) and the pupils were asked to draw a dream building of their own. The same skills were tested again in after a whole complete cycle of activities were conducted. It is done so that to show the effectiveness of the intervention conducted.

3.1.1.2 Reflective Journal

A reflective Journal refers to the action of recording ideas, personal thoughts and experiences regarding a learning process (Silverman, 2013). In terms of action research, this journal is very useful in helping a researcher to elicit his response and thoughts on the observations and readings conducted on the intervention designed. These would be evidences of the researcher's inner voice as further contemplations are made on the transition of the session and the practices applied during the conduct of the intervention.

In this research, a reflective journal was written during each session of the activity was carried out. The journal included the personal observation and details monitored among the pupils and the use of the intervention in each session. This revolved around how the pupils reacted towards the session and the shortcomings that were experienced. Besides, suggestions regarding any problems faced in the session or important ideas on how to enhance the effectiveness of the activity were also written.

This document proved to be a vital data in order to further examine the effectiveness of the activities carried out. It was also can be seen as a way to improve teaching practices and approaches as the self-reflection made involved perceptions on how the sessions could further be improvise in the future.

3.1.2   Observation

The observational research technique solely involves the researcher or an observer monitoring and making notes about the session being conducted. It is one of the most adopted data collection method because it is flexible and is strong in terms of validity (Goh, 2012). A more detailed, in-depth information is able to be collected and studied through the use of this particular method.

Since this research is about observing a change in pupils' behavior, this observational research technique is considered as the main method to collect data.The observer observed respondents' behavior and responds towards the activity. There are five aspects listed in a "observation guideline" in order to provide a better analysis and understanding on how far this series of activities in dealing with the identified issue. It is also helped the observer to identify the strengths, weakness and area of improvisations that should be given due to attention.

4   Data analysis

I conducted a series of activities to improve year 5 Kualiti pupils's participation. The activities namely "Running Dictation", "Last Man Standing" and "Find Someone Who". "Running Dictation" was conducted in the first cycle, "Last Man Standing" for the second cycle while "Find Someone Who" was conducted in the third cycle.

4.1 Running Dictation

Running Dictation activity is a paired activity. Pupils were asked to sit in pairs, one would be the writer and the other pair is the runner. The roles can be switched later on to ensure the pupils get to experience both of the roles. Pupils were exposed with knowledge about unique buildings that existed in Malaysia (e.g. The Upside Down House). A drilling session was conducted to ensure pupils understood the lesson. During the production stage, sentence strips were put up on the soft board at the back of the class. The "writer" were

prohibited from looking back. The "runner" was asked to run to the sentence strips and match the strips to the blank spaces in the worksheet given.

It is best to start the activity with a pair as I wanted the pupils to get comfortable among themselves, especially for those with low self-esteem. Sudden changes of approaches could affect the respondents mood and behavior, hence it's best to start it slowly.

Since it was a paired activity, I unintentionally put respondent 2 and 3 in a pair. Respondent 2 refused greatly and showed aggressive behavior before the activity begun. Respondent 3, on the other hand refused to participate the activity since it was in the afternoon. Their classmates enjoyed the activity as it conquers their bodily kinesthetic intelligence. Respondent 2 however, tried to complete the activity even his partner would not cooperate with him.

"Last Man Standing"

The purpose of this activity was to assess the pupils' understanding towards the lesson. I tried to vary assessment methods and not stick to worksheet type of assessment.

5   Discussion

It has been brought to attention that KPM decided to execute inclusive education program. However, there are lack of professional work force to cater to the children's need. A teacher should be an all-rounded person. A teacher should be able to identify kids with special needs, especially ADHD and low self-esteem. Therefore, in order to gain pupils' attention, teachers should explore more creative and alternative ways to teach and assess them. It is recommended that this research should be continued as the base for this research is to improve pupils' active participation in classroom, especially in primary school. Active participation in the class ensures one to receive fair and equal chances in education. Participating in a fun and engaging lesson can be a meaningful memory to the kids. Hence, by conducting a further research that is based on the pupils' total involvement and feedback after completing the activity cycle several times and how it affects the students' overall achievement in examination. It can be a continuation of this research as this already helped the pupils to participate in various kinds of assessment activities.

Other than that, alternating ways of using the series of activities is also possible and can be a good idea for teachers in school. This series of activities only takes up to 10 minutes to

assess pupils, and teacher could implement the activities in their teaching and learning lesson plan as one of the stages in the lesson, for example the production stage. In a conclusion, doing further research can help to improve the quality of the current research, which indirectly can help in self improvement of the researcher. The researcher can collaborate with other researcher or teachers in school in making the suggestion a reality.

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