

STUDENTS’ INTEREST AND USEFULNESS OF FIELDWORK APPROACHES TO HISTORY

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Abstract

It is very exciting that history in the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (ICSS) has been included as one of the core subjects in the lower and upper secondary levels of Malaysian schools. These subjects are officially included in the time table of the ordinary, religious, science, vocational and technical schools in the country. One of the most important and effective methods introduced in the teaching and learning of history is a fieldwork approaches, particularly a site visit. Since history is a compulsory subject, it is necessary to study and analyse the ICSS history curriculum to see if it really could achieve the objectives of the syllabus, successfully imparting knowledge and develop interest among students in the subject. The study involved about eight hundred students of selected secondary schools in the states of Perak and Terengganu. Instruments used were questionnaire and interview which were conducted with the selected respondents. The analysis of the study were presented in percentage by using six Likert scale responses. The study shows that history fieldwork contain many usefulness such as to develop, spark/ stimulate, motivate, investigate, prove, gain social experience, social skills, build teacher-student relation, teaching-learning method, and fulfil National Curriculum. Moreover, the effective used of history fieldwork can enhance student interest in developing the country towards the advancement of ‘first class mind’ of human capital of Malaysian. It is hoped that the finding will enlighten teachers and students in the learning of history in the ICSS towards achieving the stipulated aspiration, especially 1-Malaysia.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In October 2008, the Minister of Education Malaysia had announced that history will be included as one of the subjects in the Primary School Achievement Test or UPSR (Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah). This is a real exciting decision by the Ministry as to compliment the implementation of the New Primary School Curriculum (NPSC) throughout the country since 1983. In the NPSC history and geography were jointly taught beginning with Year Four under the subject namely ‘Man and His Environment’ (Ministry of Education Malaysia, Curriculum Development Centre – MoE, CDC, 2008).

In 1989, the Malaysian Ministry of Education implemented a new curriculum for secondary schools, known as the Integrated Curriculum for Secondary Schools (ICSS), throughout the country, beginning with Form One. In this curriculum history was included as one of the core subjects in the lower and upper secondary levels. The inclusion of history in the lower secondary level (Forms One, Two and Three) was merely a continuation of the ‘Man and His Environment’ subject of the NPSC and replaced the previous history syllabus. However, the inclusion of history in the upper

secondary level (Forms Four and Five) in all type of schools was a new requirement. On one hand, it is a privilege but on the other, it is a great responsibility for history to achieve the aims and the aspirations envisioned in the National Education Philosophy and National Development Plans (MoE, CDC 2008).

In fact, the decision to include history as one of the core subjects in the ICSS was not an overnight process. It involved the work and contributions of various individuals, professionals, academicians and historical associations. The changes in the education policy and systems to suit the aspiration of building a Malaysian nation with a unified, multi-ethnic population able to produce the required quantity and quality of human resources, in accordance with the blue print of national development projects, have had a significant impact in the designation of the history curriculum of Malaysian schools, particularly in the ICSS. It is highly expected that the student will gain various advantages and interest through the introduction of history fieldwork approaches (Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009c).

LITERATURE REVIEW

It has been emphasised that the overriding concern of Malaysia is to achieve national integration and unity, and that history is seen as an important apparatus towards achieving that end. In this respect, the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education (CDC 1989, 2008) designed the ICSS history with the intention to achieve the aim stipulated in the education philosophy and national development, that is to produce the criteria of individual who is ‘balanced and harmonious; spiritually, cognitively and physically skilful; and practising high moral values’.

In fact, these values of history curriculum are in line with the observation of Sir Keith Joseph as quoted by Grosvenor and Watts (1995) that the knowledge, understanding and skills which the study of history can confer are of great value themselves. To acquire an interest in the past is itself a cultural acquisition which can enrich the whole of one’s adult life (Black, Jeremy and MacRaild, Donald, 1997). In addition history can encourage young people to use their reason as well as their memories. Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009c (in Abdul Razaq and Isjoni 2009) stressed that a visit to a site can develop skills of analysis and criticism by encouraging students to evaluate primary source material, the skills acquired through the study of history can also enhance young people’s use of language, numeracy, observation and communication with other people. They admitted that history is indispensable to understanding the society we live. In short, properly taught, justifies its place in the curriculum by what it does to prepare all students for the responsibilities of obedience and active citizenship (Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009b).

From this statement, it is clear that, basically history has a considerable capacity to prepare students with the knowledge, understanding, skills and responsibilities necessary for the ‘good citizen’ with ‘first class mind’ (Black, Jeremy and MacRaild, Donald, 1997). This is to transform students ability and skills towards the development of history teaching kits in a multimedia forms such as power point, photos, documentary, and, short movie (Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009a). Thus, the reformulation and designation of the ICSS history would seem to be inspired by a similar philosophy.

In the ICSS, the elements of history were restructured through a variety of perspectives including political, economic, social, cultural and aesthetic (researcher’s

acronym- PESCA). For the lower secondary level (Forms One, Two and Three), the themes were confined to Malaysia, from the period of the Stone Age pre-history until the formation of Malaysian State of the Malay Melaka Sultanate and the Malay-Riau Sultanate Empire which dispersed after the Anglo-Dutch Treaty, 1824 (Andaya and Andaya, 1982). The themes were presented in chronological order and a continuation of the NPSC ‘Mans and His Environment’ subject.

In 1977, the Ministry of Education formulated a history syllabus for secondary schools. The objectives of the history curriculum 1977 were as follows:

1. to increase awareness of national identity through the learning of history;
2. to foster a sense of belonging within the community and country as a whole;
3. to develop an equal awareness of its historical heritage of all the major ethnic groups among Malaysians;
4. to foster international understanding;
5. to raise interest in history;
6. to create and develop critical thinking.

(CDC, Ministry of Education, Malaysia 1989, 2008)

It is clear that there is a very close relation between the Malaysian Education Philosophy and the Philosophy of History in the ICSS. Consequently, the Ministry of Education (CDC 1989, 2008) decided to reformulate the aims and objectives of the old 1977 history curriculum in order to meet the aspiration of the Malaysian Education Philosophy. The objectives, which were built into the History Syllabus ICSS (1989, 2008), were to enable students to:

- i. understand the political, economic and social development of the community and nation;
- ii. understand, appreciate and practise in daily life the Malaysian community values and culture;
- iii. appreciate the efforts and contributions of the national figures who have liberated and developed the nation;
- iv. have historical consciousness with regard to the existing community in the country;
- v. analyse, synthesise and evaluate the existing historical facts and evidence rationally;
- vi. upgrade thinking skills and develop maturity based on students’ learning experiences in history;
- vii. be conscious of, sensitivity to and deeply responsible for law and order and the development of the nation.

The history curriculum in the ICSS 1989, 2008 was changed in accordance with the above objectives.

The pupils of the Lower Secondary level should acquire knowledge and understanding of the above themes concerning the historical development of the country. At the same time, they are asked to identify the causes and effect of events which might affect their present situation (Brooks, Aris and Perry, 1993). The students are also encouraged to use their own minds when examining the contents of textbooks in order to

develop critical and creative thinking through the learning of history (Ariegusrini & Mohamad Johdi, 2009b).

It is clear that history within the ICSS was given a demanding task, namely to educate students to be ‘good Malaysian citizens’ with ‘first class mind’ inspired by the national development plans and the National Education Philosophy (MoE, CDC 2008). The central feature in the process of education is the focus on students, whereby teachers actively involve students in the entire range of teaching-learning activities (Ariegusrini & Mohamad Johdi, 2009b in Isjoni and Abdul Razaq, 2009).

The students should be given opportunity to use a range of historical sources including written evidence, artefacts, pictures, photographs, music, buildings, sites and computer-based materials. They should also be introduced to a range of perspectives such as political, economic, technological and scientific, social, religious, cultural and aesthetic (Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009c in Abdul Razaq and Isjoni 2009). They should be actively involved in historical investigations which stem from their own interests, through asking questions, selecting and recording their own sources, organising the information they collect and presenting their findings in a variety of ways such as orally, in writing or through model-making, pictures, drama or information technology (Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009a in Isjoni and Abdul Razaq, 2009)

The Malaysian schools’ history curriculum should recognise the essential interaction between content and process, the need for a balance of breadth and depth, and the importance of investigations stemming from students’ own interests. This can develop and enhance the creativity of students’ thinking (Ariegusrini & Mohamad Johdi, 2009b in Isjoni and Abdul Razaq, 2009). The students should be initiated, guided and shown how to investigate primary sources in order to find out about the relationship between past and present, or what it might be like to have lived at another time. Investigations should be recorded in a variety of artistic, creative and mathematical forms (Brooks, Aris and Perry, 1993). The planning might involve a sequence of stages such as an overview of resources, selection of focuses for investigations, selection of key concepts, consideration of possible activities related to each focus, long-term plans showing how activities relate to objectives and how they can be assessed (Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009c in Abdul Razaq and Isjoni 2009).

This is in accordance with the principles of the ICSS history which used an integrated approach that entailed the integration of knowledge, skills and values; the integration of theory and practice; and the integration of curriculum, the co-curriculum and the school culture (CDC 2008). The intention is to promote to students the concept of ‘history a-cross curriculum’ meaning that the elements of history are acquired in other ICSS subjects.

This is in line with Black and M.MacRaild (1997) in Britain who stated that the links between history and the ‘cross-curricular themes’ of the history curriculum are extensive and include environmental education, citizenship, family life-cycles, economic and occupations of people in the locality. These were explained by Peter Burke in the *New Perspective on Historical Writing*, 1991. Sebba (1994) says that the importance of history as a vehicle for delivering this entitlement comes from a number of aspects of teaching of history which are intrinsic to the subject. First, history deals with human motivation; and second, history has a very important part to play in students’ cultural

development. In fact, the fostering of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students has been given special attention in the ICSS history (MoE, CDC 2008).

The value of motivation is included as one of the aims of the teaching and learning of ICSS history. It should help to develop skills in students in communication, understanding concepts, to extend vocabulary and use of language, especially Bahasa Malaysia in different contexts and to encourage discussion and problem-solving. The important thing is that the student’s acquisition of historical skills and to the development of personality and self-confidence should each be systematically assessed in order to identify both progress and any need for further remedial or enrichment work. This is important in the production of motivated people who can learn effectively and be competent in their future jobs (Mohamad Johdi & Ariegusrini, 2009c in Abdul Razaq and Isjoni 2009).

Consequently, the students are expected to appreciate and practise in daily life Malaysian culture, appreciate the efforts and contributions of the national figures who have liberated and developed the nation and have historical consciousness with regard to the existing community in the country. Hence, it is necessary to study the students’ interest and the usefulness of the subject, specifically based on the Research Questions as follows:

1. To what extent are the students’ interested in the learning and teaching of fieldwork approaches in history?
2. What are the usefulness of a fieldwork approach in history as perceived by the students?

The presentation and discussion of the above questions are based on questionnaires and interviews with the respondents described in the following section.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher identified that the ‘population’ of this study are all the students of Malaysian lower secondary schools involved in the ICSS. The source of information for determining the population was obtained from the Education, Planning and Research Development (EPRD), Ministry of Education, Malaysia. There were about 1 345 secondary schools with a total of about 1 648 169 students in the country (EPRD 2008). It was impossible for the researcher to take all of them as respondents of the study. As Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) and Cohen (2006) admitted that in practice, educational researchers rarely can investigate the entire population of individuals who interest them.

Thus, the researcher employed the ‘convenience sampling’ method and selected just two states in Malaysia. The main reasons were that selection by this method suited the purpose of the study and was convenient (Gall, Borg and Gall, 1996). More specifically, first, the researcher was familiar with these two states, second, the researcher was posted in these states during the teaching practice observation, third, they were located not far from the researcher’s place of work, forth, the researcher had already obtained some information about the topic of the study, and finally, due to time constraints the selection of these states made the execution of the research possible. In fact, these reasons are in line with the definition, nature and implementation of ‘convenience sampling’ method defined by Gall, Borg and Gall (1996). Moreover, these states have the same characteristics with other states in the country as required by the study. The states of Perak and Terengganu of Malaysia were selected at this stage.

The close-ended and multiple choice answers in this study were coded and entered into the spreadsheet of the Statistical Packages of Social Sciences-SPSS. The data of answers were mainly measured in the form of number of responses and percentages. As additions, the answers were also measured, first, in mean, median and mode to measure the central tendency, second, the dispersion in the form of standard deviation. ‘Percentage’ is value of a variable which divide the observations in a data set into 100 intervals each containing an equal number of observations; ‘mean’, also called the arithmetic average, is the sum of the values of all observations divided by the number of observations; ‘median’ is the value above and below which one half of the observations fall; ‘mode’ is the most frequently occurring value or values; ‘Standard Deviation’ (Cohen 2006).

The answers of structured and semi-structured interviews were classified according to the category designed earlier which mainly based on the literature review, pre-test and pilot survey to answer the research questions.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The researcher decided to measure the students’ perceptions by the number of responses and percentages based on the ‘state’, ‘type of schools’, ‘level of education’, ‘gender’ and ‘ethnic groups’ of the respondents. The more specific research questions and findings are as follows:

Question 1:

To what extent are the students interested in the learning and teaching of fieldwork approaches in history?

In measuring the ‘interest’ of the respondents, the researcher decided to relate the discussion to two formulae, first the general definition of interest, and second, the ‘interest’ formulated as one of the objectives of the ICSS Malaysian history.

First, *Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary* (1993) lists a number of common meanings for the word ‘interest’ which include keen to hear more, continues doing, spends time, enjoys doing and learning about the subject etc. Basically, ‘interest’ is a tendency of someone to know and involve themselves more in certain subjects either because they find pleasure in it or because they need it for some purpose.

Secondly, the researcher will relate the discussion to one of the objectives formulated by the History Unit of the Malaysian Ministry of Education that is ‘to create awareness and sensitivity during the fieldwork/projects, with the intention of developing the interest of pupils in learning history’ (CDC 2008).

All these definitions of ‘interest’ are important to the author who wishes the readers, especially teachers, to think it is very important to give full attention to history as it should benefit students in both their present and future career.

The students ‘interest’ in fieldwork approaches in history

With regard to ‘interest’ the students were asked to respond to three types of questions as follows:

- a. Do you like fieldwork approaches in history?
- b. What are the most interesting things in fieldwork approaches in history?

a. Do you like fieldwork approaches in history?

In measuring the ‘interest’, first of all the respondents were asked to respond ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ that they ‘like’ the fieldwork approaches in history. The overall score is shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Do you like fieldwork approaches in history?

No.	Do you like fieldwork approaches in history?	Total Responses (Percentage)
1.	Yes	688 (86.0%)
2.	No	112 (14.0%)
Total Responses (%)		800 (100.0)

Only 14.0% (112) say ‘No’, therefore, more specifically, table 1 shows that the respondents in Terengganu are more interested than those in Perak with 89.5% and 82.5% respectively out of 400 respondents each.

Table 2: The students ‘interest’ of fieldwork approaches in history according to states

No.	Do you like fieldwork approaches in history?	States/Responses (N=800)		
		Hilir Perak	Kuala Terengganu	Total Percentage
1.	Yes	330 (82.5%)	358 (89.5%)	688 (86.0%)
2.	No	70 (17.5%)	42 (10.5%)	112 (14.0%)
Total		400	400	800

In reality, there are more historical artefacts and sites in Kuala Terengganu than Hilir Perak. Therefore, there is a possibility that a great number of students in Kuala Terengganu were really attracted to the historical evidence in their locality, especially after exploring them.

It is interesting to discover from Table 3 below that the highest response was the science schools with 90.7%, follow by the regular with 86.1% and the religious with 80.7%.

Table 3: The students’ interest of fieldwork approaches in history according to type of schools

No.	Do you like fieldwork approaches in history?	Schools/Responses (N=800)			
		Regular	Science	Religious	Total Percentage
1.	Yes	448 (86.1%)	127 (90.7%)	113 (80.7%)	688 (86.0)
2.	No	72 (13.9%)	13 (9.3%)	27 (19.3%)	112 (14.0)
Total		520 (65.0)	140 (17.5)	140 (17.5)	800 (100.0%)

The high score of science schools which are attended by higher achieving pupils is in line with the statement and survey of Bateman (1996). The reason could be the students themselves are interested in approaches which are scientific, professional and

practical. There is also a possibility that the teaching methods are attractive and of higher quality, supported by more sufficient facilities and more competent teachers compared to the regular and religious schools.

Table 4 demonstrates the students’ responses according to level of education. For the lower secondary education, the Form One scores the highest with 219 (91.2%) respondents saying ‘Yes’ from the total of 240 for every form.

Table 4: The students ‘interest’ of fieldwork approaches in history according to level of education

No.	Do you like fieldwork approaches of history?	Forms/Responses (N=800)				
		Form 1	Form 2	Form 3	Form 4	Total Percentage
1.	Yes	219 (91.2%)	198 (82.5%)	201 (83.7%)	70 (87.5%)	688 (86.0%)
2.	No	21 (8.8%)	42 (17.5%)	39 (16.3%)	10 (12.5%)	112 (14.0%)
Total (%)		240 (30.0)	240 (30.0)	240 (30.0)	80 (10.0)	800 (100.0)

Table 4 reveals that the high score of Form One students should be taken as a good sign for the teacher to develop further and cultivate their interest so that they can benefit from the subject. The good impression the subject makes at the beginning can ease the teacher in the process of providing independent learning and self-confidence for doing future fieldwork. The teacher just needs to give basic instructions and guide the students to do the local history projects.

On the other hand, the interest of respondents in Form Four was still high but slightly falling to 87.5% from 80 students. They are the students who have experienced all stages of the ICSS history curriculum.

The distribution of responses according to gender is shown in table 5 below:

Table 5: The students ‘interest’ of fieldwork approaches in history according to gender

No.	Do you like fieldwork approaches of history?	Schools/Responses (N=800)		
		Boys	Girls	Total Percentage
1.	Yes	350 (87.5%)	338 (84.5%)	688 (86.0)
2.	No	50 (12.5%)	62 (15.5%)	112 (14.0)
Total		400 (50.0%)	400 (50.0%)	800 (100.0%)

With regard to gender, it is found that boys responded ‘Yes’ marginally more than girls, that is 350 (87.5%) and 338 (84.5%) respectively, from the total of 400 respondents for each category.

Table 6 shows the responses according to ethnic groups. The table shows that the Malays score the highest with 461 (87.3%) saying ‘Yes’, followed by the Indians 86.5% (n=104) and the Chinese 81.5% (n=168).

Table 6: The students ‘interest’ of fieldwork approaches in history

according to ethnic groups

No.	Do you like fieldwork approaches of history?	Ethnic Groups/Responses (N=800)			
		Malays (n=528)	Chinese (n=168)	Indians (n=104)	Total Percentage
1.	Yes	461 (87.3%)	137 (81.5%)	90 (86.5%)	688 (86.0%)
2.	No	67 (12.7%)	31 (18.5%)	14 (13.5%)	112 (14.0%)
Total (%)		528 (66.0)	168 (21.0)	104 (13.0)	800 (100.0)

These responses were expected because most of the topics surrounding the students are related to the movements of Malay figures, buildings of Malay identity and activities of Malay culture. The researcher believed that the remnants of such events still attracted the students especially the Malays and so at the same time they were highly interested in history fieldwork. As some of the Malay students said in the interviews that the historical remnants of the Malay Sultans and national events could raise their awareness of the contributions of historical figures and stimulate loyalty to the nation (Student = S - S3, S5 and S8).

Moreover, the Malays are the indigenous people of the country and their loyalty to the nation is unquestioned. This was proved in the Second World War 1941-1945 when during the Japanese invasion of Malaysia, the Chinese fled to China to fight the Japanese in the Sino-Japanese war and the Indians, inspired and supported by the Japanese, fled to India to liberate the motherland country from the British. On the other hand, the Malays, fully assisted by British, were ‘dead and alive’ defending the country against the Japanese.

Even so the difference in response between ethnic groups was not high. This could be the proof that the present Chinese and Indian students in Malaysia have different perceptions and attitudes from the pre-Independence generations. It is now fifty years later and two generations further on. The change was possibly due to the fact that the present generation of Chinese and Indian students have been more exposed than their ancestors to the history of the country as taught in schools, especially the ‘history from below’ which is about common people as included in the ICSS history.

If this is the case, this means that one of the prominent objectives of teaching and learning ICSS history, that is to produce good and loyal citizens could be achieved.

b. What are the most interesting things in a fieldwork approach to history?

The students were given six items. They were asked to choose which was one of the most interesting things in a fieldwork approach to history. Their responses are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Students perceptions on the most interesting things in fieldwork approaches to history

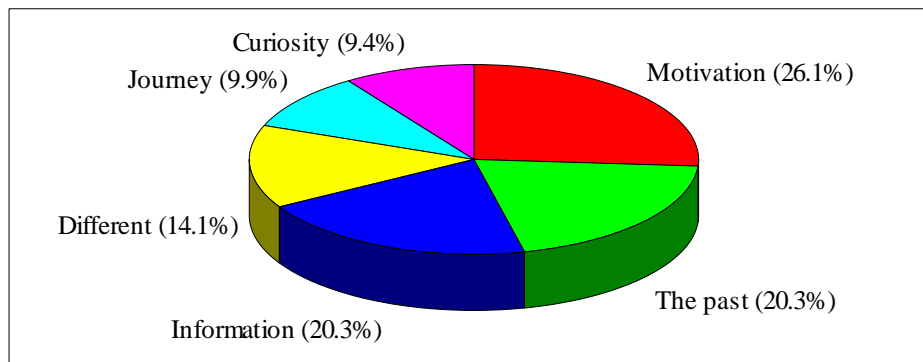
No.	Items	Total Responses (Percentage)
1.	Can see the past has really happened	162 (20.3)
2.	Raise curiosity to ask more questions	75 (9.4)
3.	Finding new information	162 (20.3)
4.	Raises interest and motivation to learn history	209 (26.1)

5.	Something different from classroom	113 (14.1)
6.	The journey to the site	79 (9.9)
Total (%)		800 (100.0)

The table demonstrates that the three highest statements responded by students are that fieldwork approaches can ‘raise interest and motivation to learn history’ (item 3), ‘see the past is really happened’ (item 1) and ‘find new information’ (item 4). These items responded by 533 (66.7%) students from the total of 800.

The distribution of **most interesting things** selected by students in percentage is illustrated in chart 1 below:

Chart 1: Students’ perceptions on the most interesting things in fieldwork approaches to history



More specifically, the most interesting thing for the students in the state of Terengganu was item 4 with 30.5% or 122 (n=400) responses, while the students in Perak were most interested in two items, that is item 1 and item 3 with 90 (22.5%) responses each.

Regarding the schools, the most interesting to the students of Regular schools was item 4 with 40.5% (n=520) responses; for those in Science schools it was item 5 with 21.4% (n=140) responses and for those in the Religious schools it was item 3 with 23.6% (n=140) responses.

For the level of education, the most interesting to the students in Form One was item 4 with 29.2%, the Form Two was item 1 with 22.5%, the Form Three was item 4 with 32.9% from 240 respondents for every form and the Form Four was item 3 with 30% of 80 respondents.

The most interesting things to the boys and girls is almost the same, that is item 4. The girls score is 27.7% and the boys is 24.5% out of 400 respondents each.

It is interesting to discover that all the ethnic groups were most attracted to the same item, that is item 4. The most interesting to them is that fieldwork approaches can raise interest and motivation to learn history: the highest was the Chinese with 31.5% (n=168), followed by the Indians 28.8% (n=104) and unexpectedly the lowest was the Malays with 23.9% (n=528). The result indicates that the earlier hypothesis saying the Chinese and Indians students have lower interest in fieldwork approaches to history than the Malays is rejected.

Possibly, the present generations of the Chinese and the Indians are more ‘situational and realistic’ in feeling that Malaysia, their place of birth, is their own

country and loyalty should not be divisible. This is in accordance with the fact that the past is our heritage, although it is gone, we feel a part of it. In fact, they are ‘stirred’ by both Malaysian history and the ‘glorious’ history of their ancestors’ motherlands.

Question 2:

What are the usefulness of a fieldwork approach in history as perceived by the students?

The students’ perception on the usefulness of fieldwork approaches in history were explored with the following questionnaire. There were 800 students involved in the survey.

Table 8 demonstrates the students’ agreement and disagreement on the usefulness of fieldwork approaches in history.

Table 8: Students’ perceptions on the usefulness of fieldwork approaches to history

Do you think that fieldwork approaches are useful to:		Students’ Responses (N=800) Scale/ Percentage					
		1 Very Strongly Disagree	2 Strongly Disagree	3 Disagree	4 Agree	5 Strongly Agree	6 Very Strongly Agree
No.	Items	Disagree			Agree		
1.	develop interest and encourage the desire to study history.	22 (2.8)	38 (4.8)	52 (6.5)	145 (18.1)	284 (35.5)	259 (32.4)
		14%			86.0%		
2.	develop interest of pupils in learning history as a whole.	25 (3.1)	29 (3.6)	48 (6.0)	171 (21.4)	280 (35.0)	247 (30.9)
		12.7%			87.3%		
3.	create awareness among pupils towards a community, its culture and values, from historical and present perspectives.	18 (2.3)	30 (3.8)	53 (6.6)	185 (23.1)	309 (38.6)	205 (25.6)
		12.7%			87.3%		
4.	encourage pupils to relate their local studies to the regional and national context where possible.	21 (2.6)	38 (4.8)	86 (10.8)	238 (29.8)	271 (33.9)	146 (18.3)
		18.2%			81.8%		
Total Responses (%)		460 (14.4%)			2740 (85.6%)		

The result shows that 86.0% respondents agreed that fieldwork approaches are useful to develop interest and encourage the desire to study history. It is interesting to discover that in both responses ‘2’ and ‘3’ 87.3% respondents agreed.

Discussion on the students ‘interest’ and ‘usefulness’ in fieldwork approaches to history

Looking at the findings, it is proved that the introduction of history in the ICSS could cultivate more interest among students in the learning and teaching of history as a whole. Therefore, the objective formulated by the History Unit of the Malaysian Ministry of

Education that is ‘to create awareness and sensitivity during the fieldwork/projects, with the intention of developing the interest of students in learning history’ could be achieved.

As an addition, the students discovered new information through dealing with the topics around them, such as about their parents, schools, place of residence and local figures.

The main advantages as mentioned by many of the students that they can see, feel and explore on their own that the past is really happened and ‘history is still alive’. As one of the students from Science school said ‘By studying the importance of the river I could justify the reason for the Maziah Palace is located at the mouth of Terengganu River, the White Mosque was built by the river side and most of the settlements were along the river’ (S1).

Another advantage is that history is reinforced by students’ own discovery of ‘facts’ and ‘evidence’ during the fieldwork and can be matched with those written in the text books.

One of the students in Perak said ‘I could get the real facts and see on my own the reasons for Teluk Intan as one of the busiest river port in the state’ (S2). She added, ‘First, Teluk Intan is linked with railway from Ipoh via Tapah Road to export tin, second, this town is surrounded by commercial crops such as rubber and oil palm, and finally, it is surrounded by many villages, including founded by the Jawa, Minangkabau, Acheh, and Rawa from Indonesia’. Confidently she ended, ‘only some of these facts could be found in the history text book that we learned in class’.

Another Science student (S4) said in the interview that ‘by doing fieldwork approaches in history I could also compare with the history of different places’. He added ‘I came from Ipoh. I could realise that the function of Teluk Intan has similarities with Ipoh which is located by the Kinta River. Previously, Ipoh was a river port especially for export and import goods related to tin mining. There are many traders and settlers are multi-ethnic’. He concluded ‘it is really interesting to be involved in history fieldwork’.

The students’ interest on fieldwork approaches of history is not enough if it just to survey why they are interested. It is just as important for them to realise the usefulness of this approach. With regard to this the researcher continued the investigation in the interview:

One of the students admitted that she (S3) agreed fieldwork approaches to history are useful. She said ‘this approach is useful for understanding that history is all around us and it really happens outside the classroom. I could see history did exist’. This means that this approach helped students consolidate some knowledge they already had of figures or sites by giving them a visual image of them.

A Form Four science student (S2) stressed ‘The students learned about sources, change and continuity and a concrete primary source of evidence. The fieldwork approaches helped the students to visualise, for example a certain historical building, its function and life inside it’. This could help the students to understand the concept of ‘empathy’ in history, help them to understand more clearly and enable them to see history in context.

A fieldwork approach is useful to students because this is a good opportunity for them to actively investigate and examine evidence. This is in line with a Form Three science student (S5) who said ‘This approach could stimulate historical pupil-led enquiry. We learned investigation skills that is how to observe, examine and record findings’. She

claimed that this would lead students to use evidence, draw conclusions and look at interpretation.

At the same time, this approach is useful to help students to develop other historical skills such as imagination and role play. This mentioned by a Form Four students ‘We can act how the ruler entertained foreign guests as in the history of Kuala Terengganu who were then often visited by traders from Arab countries, China and Jawa’ (S6). On the other hand, the location of Kuala Terengganu town at the mouth of a river could be used by students to defend the town in a ‘strategic thinking’ discussion.

Moreover, the fieldwork approaches of history are useful to develop, stimulate or spark interest and enthusiasm. It is an outside classroom teaching and learning method that could encourage students to participate in asking questions such as in a quiz, game and role play in the classroom lessons.

A Form Three student from a regular school stressed fieldwork methods as useful for creating a ‘noble learning environment’ (S8). Even the first visit could help to form the basis for future lessons. This is a good opportunity to re-affirm the ‘interest in history’ from concrete evidence. This is in line with one of the students who admitted ‘this is a good chance for a teacher to present the lesson in a different way and a different method of learning for student’ (S7). Hence, this approach can also allow closer relations to develop between teacher and student.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, the students should be aware that their surroundings are full of historical evidence which could raise, develop and encourage interest in the teaching and learning of history which is stated as one of the aims of the ICSS History curriculum, Malaysia. Moreover, the students should be concerned with the usefulness of historical artefacts for the present as well as the future, and realise they need to be taken care of, preserved and, more importantly, appreciated, even though the country is developed and covered by mega multi-media projects. It is also proved that history fieldwork contain many usefulness such as to develop, spark/ stimulate, motivate, investigate, prove, gain social experience, social skills, build teacher-student relation, teaching-learning method, and fulfil National Curriculum. It is clear that the effective used of history fieldwork can enhance student interest in developing the country towards the advancement of ‘first class mind’ of human capital of Malaysian.

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