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**Community of Inquiry - A New Inquiry-Based Pedagogy for Realizing
the Aspiration of Critical Thinking in the New Blueprint for Education
2013-2025**

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ABSTRACT

In realising the critical thinking aspiration of the educational blueprint 2013-3025, the study introduced an inquiry-based pedagogy in the Malaysian Standard School Curriculum, namely the community of inquiry (CI) to enhance students' critical, collaborative and ethical thinking in Islamic Education and Civic and Citizenship Education classrooms. The study employed a qualitative action research design, where researchers used observations, interviews, and reflective journal as means of gathering rich data from students. Findings of the study have shown that the CI was able to be practiced and implemented with several required conditions, which mainly are teachers' knowledge and skills in CI. CI was successful in improving students' levels of inquiry, critical thinking skills and also interest in the subject content.

1. INTRODUCTION

The report presents the preliminary findings of the study, which objectives are; first, to examine how Malaysian teachers can practice an inquiry-based pedagogy, namely the community of inquiry in the new Malaysian Standard Curriculum; secondly, to identify the practice of community inquiry in the teaching of different subjects such as social studies and Islamic education; and finally to evaluate the extent of the community of inquiry on students' critical thinking, particularly higher-order thinking skills.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study employed two case studies and an action research design involving teachers who were trained in the philosophical inquiry (PI) method. The teachers were considered teacher-researchers because they conducted the class using PI rather than participants. Two teachers taught Islamic Education, while another taught Civic and Citizen Education subject. All three teachers taught in different schools, where one of the Islamic Education teachers taught in a public school, whereas the other two taught in private Islamic schools. Both private schools were using the national curriculum. The teacher-researchers were guided by the researchers in the study. Methods of data collections were recorded classroom observations, reflective learning journals (students and researcher), collections of students' questions and responses in classes, tests, classroom written work, and students' interviews. Instruments used in the study were Bloom's Taxonomy Guide, Question Quadrant, observation checklist, and interview protocols. The data were later analysed using various methods of data analyses such as frequency tabulation, thematic and narrative analysis.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In some studies, community of inquiry (CI) is referred to as 'Community of Philosophical Inquiry' or CoPI (e.g. in Hannam & Echeverria, 2009), and 'collaborative philosophical inquiry' (e.g. in Millett & Tapper, 2010). For the purpose of this research, the term 'community of inquiry' (CI) is derived from Matthew Lipman's program of Philosophy for Children (P4C), while philosophical inquiry (PI) is the method that can help to create a CI. Both aims to mould a group of students who "listen to one another with respect, build on one another's ideas, challenge one another to supply reasons for otherwise unsupported opinions, assist each other in drawing inferences from what has been said, and seek to identify one another's assumptions" (Lipman, 2003, p. 20). Although P4C is usually considered as a 'stand alone' approach of teaching thinking, it is also practiced as an infusion approach, which the study has done, through the Islamic Education and Civic and Citizenship Education subjects. Although the PI method was conducted in different classrooms, by different teachers and through different subjects, findings have shown that it is possible to create a CI in the Malaysian classroom.

4. FINDINGS

In addressing the first research questions, the study found that teachers themselves must practice asking higher-order-thinking questions, as they should be the living examples for the students. They should no longer be satisfied receiving answers from students. Instead, they should make them question continuously in order to generate the thinking culture. Teachers' knowledge and skills are essential in ensuring the success of CI because teachers have to prepare well the teaching materials such as texts, songs, video clips or using of any symbolic objects as a stimulus to the discussion. Teachers also need to have inquiry skills such as probing and scaffolding the discussion.

In responding to the second research question, again the study has found that teachers with good knowledge in PI method can achieve the objectives and outcomes of the lessons with suitable materials. Teachers also need to understand that CI is based on the philosophy of a democratic classroom, where learning is no longer directed by the teacher but by the student. As such, the teacher's role is to facilitate students' learning and not to 'spoon feed' them. The focus of the teaching and learning is no longer in mastering the content, but in acquiring the skills and values. Hence, the use of higher-order-thinking questions helps students to form ways, identify and discover good solutions or alternatives. On the other hand, even the lower-order-thinking questions help students especially the weak ones to understand the situation better before discussing it at a deeper level. Overall, students expressed their enjoyment and interest in CI because they found that their views were appreciated, they become more open minded and learnt to respect others' views.

The final findings of the study have shown that CI can help to enhance students' critical thinking, particularly the HOTs. Students in all the three classes displayed increase in the levels of questioning skills and types of questions (refer appendix A). Students' responses moved from LOT to HOT with analysis as the most frequent type of questions asked. The discussions in the CI were supported by logical reasoning instead of appealing to emotion though participants were encouraged to share their personal feelings and thoughts. Students learnt to be objective, practice good reasoning and put thinking into habits and practice. Most importantly, community of inquiry approach allow multiple perspectives to be recognized and acknowledge so that students learn to embrace differences and understand opposing positions by using their higher order thinking skills. Indeed, these are elements of critical, collaborative and ethical thinking that are imperative in sustaining harmony in a multi ethnic country such as Malaysia.

5. CONCLUSION

CI has benefitted both students and teachers in becoming a better learning community. It is applicable and suitable to be used in the teaching of any subjects though the study only involved Islamic Education and Civic and Citizenship Education classroom,

because the success of CI depends on the teachers' knowledge and skills. CI can empower students directly and indirectly, unearth their inner potentials, and most importantly can improve their thinking skills if done correctly. Last but not least, it can help Malaysian teachers to offer good learning experiences to our students using the latest new curriculum and achieving some aspirations, particularly the critical aspiration as mentioned in the latest Malaysian New Blueprint for Education 2013-2025.

ACHIEVEMENT

- i) **Name of Conference Proceeding:** Lina Mursyidah Hamzah, Suhailah Hussien, Wan Mazwati Wan Yusoff. (2015). "Students' Views and Experiences of the Philosophical Inquiry method in Learning 'Aqidah: A Case Study of Form Two Students". In N. H. Hussin, N. N. Jaafar, K. Abdul Razak, N. Y. Musa, A. T. Hassan, L. Ghazali, K. Zakaria, K. Abdul Ghani, M. I. Mohd Pisol, & M. Mohd Khir (Eds.), *Practicality of Islamic Alternatives: Issues and Challenges*, Proceedings of International Conference on Islamic Education and Social Entrepreneurship 2015 (ICIESE 2015) held in Langkawi, Malaysia, 12-14 October 2015 (pp. 47-54). Selangor, Malaysia: Association of Malay Muslim Intellectuals. (ISBN:978-967-10160-9-1).
- ii) **Human Capital Development:**
 - a. 1 PhD (ongoing)
 - b. 2 Masters – coursework and Directed Research (graduated)

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APPENDICES

- i. Appendix A: Table 1: Frequency Distributions of Students' LOT and HOT Questions
Table 2: Trends of LOT and HOT in All Sessions.

Table 1 Frequency Distribution of Students' LOT and HOT Questions

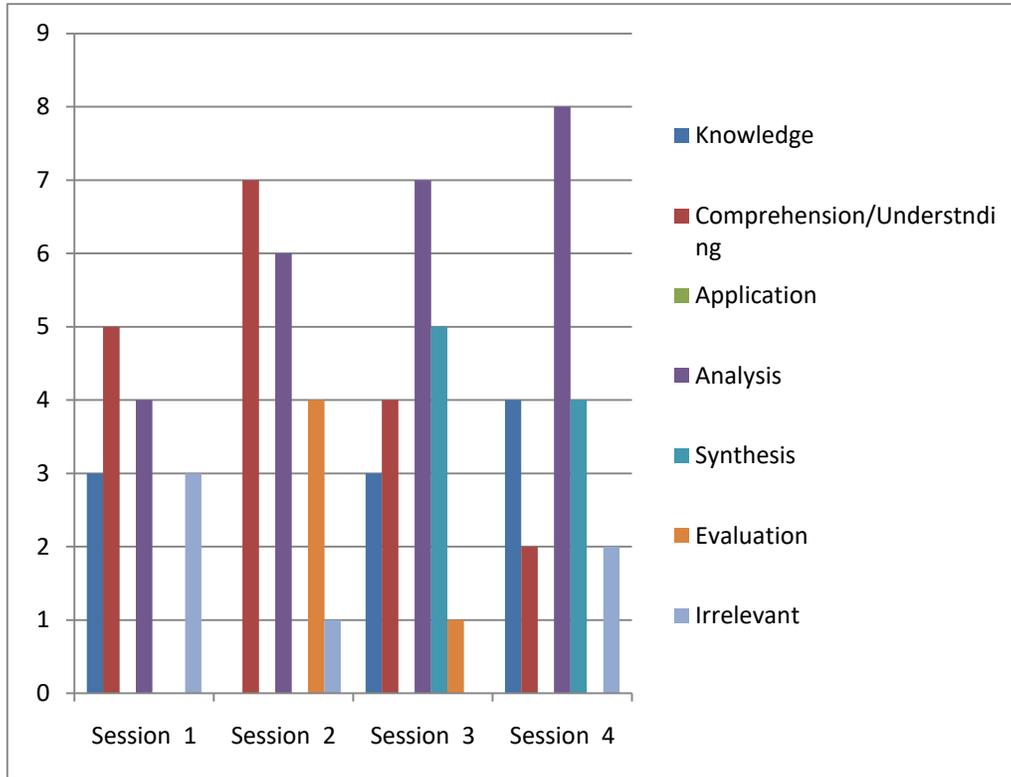


Table 2 Trends of LOT and HOT in All Sessions

