

The Impact of Hikmah (Wisdom) Pedagogy on 21st Century Skills of Selected Primary and Secondary School Students in Gombak District Selangor Malaysia

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Abstract

In this paper the impact of Hikmah Pedagogy (HP) on critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking and communication skills of students in primary and secondary schools through the subjects of Malay (also known as Bahasa Malaysia) and English languages were investigated. The participating teachers were trained by experts from the Center for Teaching Thinking, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and they were observed and supervised to ensure HP was implemented correctly. This study employed the case study method to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data were collected before and after the intervention of the HP using the Cognitive Behavior Checklist. Mid-semester and final examination results were used to gauge improvement in English and Bahasa Malaysia. These data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The qualitative data were collected through interviewing teachers individually at the beginning and focus group discussion (FGD) at the end of study. The data were analysed qualitatively to identify the emerging themes. The findings show that when students were given opportunity to ask questions based on the given stimulus materials and to voice out their opinions in the dialogic approach of HP, they demonstrated the ability to reason well; think about their own thinking; to think caringly and collaboratively. Students showed improvement in their communication skills in both languages which were indicated by the increase in their examination results, particularly in writing and oral skills.

Keywords: Hikmah (Wisdom) Pedagogy, community of inquiry, thinking skills, Malay Language teaching, English Language teaching, communication skills, collaborative skills

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Knowledge, especially in science and technology, changes so rapidly that deciding on curriculum content become very challenging. Therefore, schools should focus on nurturing independent learners by equipping them with excellent thinking and communication skills. In addition, language as the medium of thinking and communication should also be enhanced. This requires changes in teaching and learning (T&L) in schools and institutions of education. Darling-Hammond and McCloskey (2008) recommend that the curriculum should focus on 21st century skills which are the ability to find and organize information to solve problems; design and conduct research; analyze and synthesize data; apply learning in new situations; monitor and improve one's own learning and achievement; communicate well in various forms, work in teams and to be an independent learner. Saavendra and Opfer (2012) also point out in their study that 21st-century skills include creativity and innovation, critical thinking, problem solving, decision-making, and learning to learn (or metacognition). This suggests that it is important for critical thinking skills (CTS) to be incorporated into the school curriculum as it benefits students' academic achievement and also helps students to make correct conclusions. Having these skills enabled students to make wise decisions for they would be able to filter and choose the right information and apply it to innovate creative solutions to their life's problems and challenges (Moore & Parker, 2012). Internet

has democratized knowledge, where information could be assessed at fingertips. Being a critical thinker enabled one to filter and choose correct information from massive amount of information to make correct judgment and wise decisions. Critical thinking depends on criteria, such as “standards, bylaws, rules, regulations, methods, guidelines, requirements, boundaries, limits, conditions, principles, procedures, policies, measures”, etc. (Lipman, 2003, p. 213). These criteria are the measure for believing or accepting universal truth or falsehood which is further supported by the relevant experts, so that it can be accepted and respected.

Malaysia's achievement in international comparative studies such as TIMSS for science and mathematics, and PISA for literacy, science and mathematics has been on a decline since 2007. Malaysia ranks 1/3 below in comparison to OECD countries for PISA and other countries including Vietnam and Thailand (PPPM, 2013). The Malaysian Education Development Plan reported that 18 percent and 20 percent of students fail to achieve Malaysia's minimum level skills for mathematics and science respectively. According to World Bank economists, “Malaysia's lower education quality is more worrying than household debt” (Zachariah, 2014). Frederico Gil Sander, World Bank senior economist for Malaysia, said Malaysians need to “be alarmed” that the performance of students for PISA is worse than students in Vietnam, a poorer country than Malaysia. PISA 2012 reported that Malaysian students scored below average and ranked 52th out of 65 countries. Instead, Vietnamese students were ranked 17th out of 65 countries (Sheridan, 2014). Malaysia ranked 39th out of 44 countries in problem-solving tests for 15-year-olds. Achievement in reading literacy was also below PISA OECD average (PPPM, 2013). This situation raises concerns over two things: the need to increase the effort to strengthen the education system to meet the challenges of globalization by finding the root cause since from the financial perspective, a large budget has been allocated for education. Secondly, the failure of students in mathematics problem solving and weaknesses in reading showed that Malaysian students are still weak in language proficiency, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, although their achievements in public exams are often high.

Hence public and private education institutions are looking for the best and effective T&L strategies and methodologies. In fact, the national education system is undergoing a huge change in terms of curriculum, methodology, assessment and teacher's roles. The Ministry of Education Malaysia has introduced the Primary School Standard Curriculum (PSSC), Secondary School Standard Curriculum (SSSC), School Based Assessment (SBA), I-Think and has trained trainers to disseminate ideas of teaching and learning for higher order thinking skills (HOTS). SBA is considered to provide more space for HOTS because it emphasises formative tests that assesses the knowledge and skills of students (assessment as learning) in contrast to summative tests that focus on regurgitating content knowledge (assessment of learning). Several teaching for thinking programs have been implemented in Malaysia since a few decades ago such as the Boston Model introduced by Schwatz & Perkins and the model of Cognitive Research Trust (CoRT1 and CoRT 4) by de Bono, Problem Based Learning, and the I-think. In fact, when launching the Secondary Integrated Curriculum in 1989 the teaching manuals and teacher training emphasized the use of Critical and Creative Thinking Skills (CCTS) as well as the Socratic Methods in the classroom. The same was emphasized in the introduction to Smart School in 1996 (Hashim & Hussien, 2003). But these efforts have not been successful and were not widespread.

Review of literature indicated that the pedagogy practiced by many teachers in T&L in Malaysia still failed to develop students with higher order thinking skills and to be competent in both languages (Mohd Azhar, Mohd Koharuddin, & Muhamed Fauzi, 2006; Zulkarami Mohd Johan, 2011; Abdul Halim and Siti Muhibah, 2015). Looking at the above-mentioned efforts to improve higher order thinking (which include critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinking skills) and language skills, little is known of the impact of the philosophical inquiry method, represented by the Philosophy Program for Children or its variation, the Hikmah Pedagogy in the Malaysian context.

Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out the impact of Hikmah Pedagogy of philosophical inquiry through the formation of a community of inquiry, on critical, creative, caring, collaborative thinking and communication skills of primary and secondary school students. This study attempted to investigate the effects of students' thinking and communication skills in English and Bahasa Malaysia. These subjects lend itself to the Hikmah Pedagogy (HP) because philosophical inquiry is focused on ideas, concepts and meaning. These two language subjects provide many opportunities to discuss philosophical ideas. Specifically, this study attempted to answer the following questions: (1) Does HP improve communication skills in English and Bahasa Malaysia? And (2) Does HP improve cognitive behaviors of reasoning, speaking and listening, metacognition, manners and students' openness?

1.2 Philosophy for Children Program and Hikmah Pedagogy

Philosophy for Children (P4C) was developed by M. Lipman (1988, 2003) in the 1970s. He introduced this

program based on philosophy after realizing the weakness of First Year students at Columbia University in reasoning and making rational and thoughtful judgments. He introduced a unique pedagogy that begins with reading text from novels aloud, raising questions about the text and discussing the questions raised. His pedagogy incorporates ideas from Dewey, Vygotsky and some contemporary philosophers and linguists. From a small start in 1970, this program has been adopted and adapted by educators and practitioners in 60 countries today. There are several variants of P4C today, such as Philosophy with Children (UK) and Hikmah Pedagogy (HP) in Malaysia, but they all have one thing in common, which is the community of inquiry (Sutcliffe, 2017).

In Lipman's (2017, pp. 5-6) opinion, his P4C program is the best approach to improve thinking skills among children as it encompasses the following six points:

- 1) Interest—it involves a storyline on children who talk about interesting and controversial issues.
- 2) Emotion—P4C is not limited to the improvement of critical thinking only but also the understanding that thinking involves and is triggered by emotions.
- 3) Critical Thinking—P4C includes critical thinking but in greater breadth and depth.
- 4) Values—the stories combined values that are sometimes ambiguous to give space for participants to think about the values and better evaluate them.
- 5) Creativity—good thoughts are dominated by imagination, so stories in the text help children in imagination.
- 6) Community—philosophy is done through dialogue with all members of the community. They share and collaborate in investigating ideas or problems.

According to Sprod (2017, p. xii), philosophical inquiry is an essential tool that can improve critical thinking, but more importantly, as a means of transforming education—shifting from teacher-centered and student-centered education to a community-centered inquiry. In P4C, teachers are empowered and students are given the opportunity to speak—and also, they are given access to hear their peers' voices (something they often mention when asked about the value of P4C). In listening and learning from each other, students and teachers are all participated in the democratic process, using and enhancing skills involved in other aspects of thinking—creative, caring, contextual, collaborative, emotional and so on. As the children or teenagers explore and examine their experiences and approaches to life, their classroom is increasingly becoming more inclusive of differences, either in learning styles, ethnic, gender or culture. In transforming education this way, Sprod is confident that we can transform society gradually.

P4C works to empower students to: (a) Strengthen and improve reasoning; (b) develop creativity; (c) Nurture self-confidence, open mindedness, mutual respect, co-operation and being considerate individually and inter-personally; (d) Foster communication skills and collaboration; (e) Find meaning from what is experienced and learned; (f) Make a wise decision (based on the criteria and after examining all available options).

Hikmah Pedagogy is a variation of P4C and was introduced in Malaysia in the year 2002 (Preece & Adila, 2014; Hashim, 2002) and its founder chose the Malay-Arabic term Hikmah because its meaning encompasses wisdom, knowledge about the proper or exact position of something (manners), good judgement, natural capabilities to understand a thing, knowledge of the entire experience life; attitudes, beliefs or wise actions; the teachings of the ancient sages (including the prophets) and the ability to view internal quality and connections (Hashim, 2009:660). She also chose this based on the verse of the Qur'an (2: 269) which means: "God gives Wisdom to whom He pleases. And he to whom wisdom is granted receive overflowing benefits."

The objectives of Hikmah Pedagogy are similar to that of P4C with the addition of a seventh objective, namely to understand the Qur'an, the Traditions of the Prophet Muhammad (Sunnah) and the Islamic worldview in more depth and breadth. The Hikmah Pedagogy should transform its recipients.

1.3 Language Study, Thinking Skills and Hikmah Pedagogy

A study (Osman & Hashim, 2006) compared critical thinking skills and reading skills in English among students who were taught using the Philosophy for Children program and the Reader Response approach. The study found that the reading skills of students from the P4C group improved in contrast to the Reader Response. In addition, students in the P4C group exhibit differences in quantities and qualities in terms of questions, discussions and journal entries. Rosnani Hashim (2003) conducted an experimental study for 12 weeks. The students were taught Bahasa Malaysia once per week using Hikmah Pedagogy. She used New Jersey Test of Reasoning Skills (NJTRS) to measure students' reasoning skills before and after the program and compared the result between treatment and control groups. The study found that doing philosophy helped to improve critical

thinking skills significantly ($t(29) = -1.80, p = .009$). Preece (2013) conducted a study to discover the effects of using English materials (ELTs) that mix “thinking stories,” which contain the culture, values and aspirations of Asian students and “philosophical” issues such as morality, ethics, knowledge, value and existence. Then he used the community of inquiry method in T&L. This qualitative study found that community of inquiry method leverage on students with intrinsic motivation, understanding in narrative form, the opportunity to voice out their views in philosophical discussions and to make teaching contents relevant to students' values, culture and worldview.

Hashim, Hussien and Adesile (2014) studied the impact of HP on students who had been attending the program for one year at International Islamic School Malaysia, Gombak and found that their thinking and communication skills improved. Some other studies have also been conducted to see the effectiveness of Pedagogy Hikmah to promote higher order thinking skills in the teaching of Islamic Education (Hashim, Hussien, & Juperi, 2014; Mohd Kaziman, 2015; Hendon, 2016).

2. Method

This study employed both quantitative and qualitative research designs. For quantitative design, the data were collected by teachers using the Cognitive Behavior Checklist developed by the Institute for the Advancement of Philosophy for Children (IAPC); and the mid-year and end-of-year exams result in English or Bahasa Malaysia subjects were used to measure the impact of HP on students' performance. The data then were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The proposed experimental tests cannot be implemented due to logistical problems. For qualitative design, the case study method was employed to collect data from 5 teachers. These teachers were interviewed individually at the beginning of the study and focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted at the end of the study. The participants consisted of 5 teachers, 2 English teachers (one secondary school, HZ and one primary school GN) and 3 Bahasa Malaysia teachers (one primary, GI and two secondary schools, HH and GSJ). All teachers have a Bachelor's Degree and professional qualification either Bachelor's Degree with Education, or Certificate of Teaching. SMH is a multi-racial school, so the students from HZ and HH classes were multiracial, almost equally between Malay, Chinese and Indian while students from GSJ, GI and GN classes were predominantly Malay.

2.1 Instrumentation

The instrument used to collect quantitative data was the IAPC Cognitive Behavior Checklist. The instrument contained 18 items to measure 5 skills—speaking and listening (6 items, examples: students could develop other students' ideas), reasoning (5 items, example: could argue with evidence), metacognition (2 items, example: could use inquiry terms such as I agree and I want to inquire), manners in community of inquiry (2 items, example: students discuss in good manners), and openness (3 items, example: accept criticism from other students). This checklist is measured by 4 points Likert scale; 1 = need serious attention, 2 = needs more attention; 3 = encouraging development; and 4 = good. This checklist was translated into Bahasa Malaysia. Teachers were asked to evaluate pupils' progress at the beginning of the study after teaching using HP and after the last class at the end of the study. The instrument has an overall reliability of alpha Cronbach .952, while the reliability of the five component skills ranged from .887 to .930. The second quantitative data were the mid-year students' results of examination taken shortly before HP intervention commenced and the results of the year-end examination immediately after the HP intervention program ended. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Qualitative data were collected through individual teacher interviews in the middle of the study and focus group discussion at the end of the study.

The teachers involved were trained in Hikmah Pedagogy for three days at the Faculty of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia. The training covered the theory and practice of Pedagogy of Hikmah, the concept of critical, creative, collaborative, communicative and caring thinking (5C), method of developing community of inquiry to drive 5C, logic and fallacy, preparing stimulus materials, concept games and teaching preparation.

This training course included HP demonstrations in the classrooms at the teachers' schools by a trained expert to be modelled by the teachers. During the demonstrations, students sat in U-shaped seating arrangement; methods of stimulating student to ask questions and organize discussion in a community of inquiry were also demonstrated. After the demonstrations by an expert, teachers conducted the Pedagogy of Hikmah once a week for one hour for each class. Thus, students were exposed to community of inquiry once a week. For T&L purposes, teachers were required to make a daily lesson plan (DLP) for each teaching period. The DLP was first reviewed by HP Program Supervisor from CTT, IIUM and once the teachers understood, they themselves planned and applied the DLP. In the first month, CTT Program Supervisors went to the schools almost every week for discussion and supervision. In the following months, supervisions were made once a month only.

The preparation of stimulus materials involved re-presenting contents of textbooks into stories that contain dialogues and one major concept or issue. For developing caring thinking skills, the stories were required to have elements of values. Sometimes teachers prepared the materials or wrote the stories themselves and some other times teachers just took the right and relevant materials from the internet. DLP must contain at least one concept; an in-depth inquiry point; teaching objectives and learning outcomes involving three components namely (a) understanding; (b) critical and / or creative thinking skills; and (c) the value or caring thinking skills; a discussion plan containing a list of about 3 inquiries consistent to the inquiry lines and learning outcomes; and follow-up activities for consolidation.

2.2 Limitation of the Study

The first challenge faced in this study was the difficulty to get the approval from the schools' administrator to allow their teachers to attend the intensive training in Hikmah Pedagogy. The time of the training had to be cut short because teachers were given only three days to attend the training. The teachers were selected and instructed by the administrators; therefore, some of them were reluctant to attend the training and participate in the study. This affected their knowledge and skills in HP. To overcome this challenge, the researchers had to spend more time supervising the teachers at schools to assist teachers in preparing and conducting PH sessions. Furthermore, the study planned to conduct 12 HP session over 12 consecutive weeks but the teachers were able to implement HP for eight sessions over three months due to students were required to attend other compulsory programs; and the teachers were worried about not being able to finish the syllabus to prepare the students for examinations.

3. Results

To facilitate readers, the results of this study will be discussed first based on quantitative data which was the evaluation of student progress by the teacher and the examination score in the subject. Second, the discussion of qualitative data will be presented.

3.1 Communication and Thinking skills from Quantitative Data

To answer the first and second research questions on the impact of HP on communication skills and thinking skills, the first quantitative data, the final exam mean scores (after HP), were compared with the mid-year examination mean scores (before doing HP). The data in Table 1 shows the mean increase for all classes and levels for both Languages. The results were statistically significant for English at both the secondary and primary levels in oral, essay and comprehension.

Table 1. T-test results: differences in mean paired samples.

Class and Subject		N	Mean Diff Pre-post	SD	Mean SE	95% Difference CI		t	df	p
						Low	High			
F2 Topaz	BM	18	-1.83	3.89	.92	--3.77	10	-1.995	17	.062
F4 Perintis	BM	38	-2.50	12.599	2.044	-6.641	1.641	-1.223	37	.229
	Oral BM	38	-4.17	1.920	.303	-4.789	-3.561	-13.75	39	.000*
Y4 Adil	BM Essay	38	-16.11	10.503	1.704	-19.557	-12.653	-9.452	37	.000*
	BM Comp	38	-2.84	10.548	1.711	-6.309	.625	-1.661	37	.105
F4 Progresif	English	41	-3.46	7.284	1.137	-5.762	-1.164	-3.045	40	.004*
	Oral Eng	42	-1.83	1.208	.186	-2.209	-1.456	-9.835	41	.000*
Y4 Adil	Eng Essay	38	-11.95	11.193	1.815	-15.626	-8.268	-6.580	37	.000*
	Eng Comp	38	14.66	13.656	2.215	10.169	19.146	6.616	37	.000*

*significant at $\alpha = .05$.

But for Bahasa Malaysia, there was only statistically significant increase in Bahasa Malaysia Oral exam for Form 4 Perintis and Writing exam for Year 4. The Hikmah Pedagogy was clearly able to improve communication skills when oral test score increased significantly. This finding was further supported by the English teacher's (HZ) statement, "So for example, I made School-Based Oral Test (ULBS). For Form 4 we have two tests, one test before HP in semester 1, one test in semester 2. In semester 1, their test scores, if you look in the room, in that file, their oral test scores were low. When in semester 2, after I implemented HP, I could give them full marks but I deduct one mark. Because they all have the charisma to speak". However, achievements in English and Bahasa Malaysia comprehension did not show improvement except for Form 4 Progresif, which was a mediocre class.

The t-test results showed the differences of the variables tested which were achievements in English (4 Adil), and Bahasa Malaysia (4 Adil) exams. The results were positive for all aspects of the language except English Comprehension, $t(37) = 6.62$, $p = .000$. This means achievement in the subject of English Language Comprehension dropped significantly from mean 62.2 to 47.6. However, for other subjects there were an increase in achievement.

(1) Class 4 Adil English Writing from 56.8 to 68.7, $t(37) = -6.58$, $p = .000$;

(2) Class 4 Adil Bahasa Malaysia Writing from 58.8 to 74.9, $t(37) = -9.45$, $p = .000$.

3.2 Teacher Evaluation of Students' Progress

Analysis of data and the reporting of the results of those analyses are fundamental aspects of the conduct of research. Accurate, unbiased, complete, and insightful reporting of the analytic treatment of data (be it quantitative or qualitative) must be a component of all research reports. Researchers in the field of psychology use numerous approaches to the analysis of data, and no one approach is uniformly preferred as long as the method is appropriate to the research questions being asked and the nature of the data collected. The methods used must support their analytic burdens, including robustness to violations of the assumptions that underlie them, and they must provide clear, unequivocal insights into the data.

The second quantitative data was collected from the IAPC Cognitive Behavior Checklist which was measured by Likert scale 4 points, 1 = need serious attention; 2 = need more attention; 3 = encouraging development; and 4 = good used. This checklist examines 5 constructs: improving student skills in communication (speech and hearing), reasoning, metacognition (thinking), manners (interpersonal), and open mindedness (critical thinking). The criterion for mean interpretation is

Need serious attention 1.00–1.74

Need more attention 1.75–2.49

Encouraging development 2.50–3.24

Good 3.25–4.00

Table 2 shows the progress of students in five skills based on the teachers' assessment at the beginning and at the end of the study. GN and HZ were English teachers for Year 4 and Form 4, while GI, GSJ and HH were Bahasa Malaysia teachers for Year 4, Form 1 and Form 4 respectively. Obviously, based on the above criteria, achievement in Bahasa Malaysia according to Class, HH reported good progress on students' metacognition, manners, and open mindedness while they made encouraging development on reasoning. They needed to pay more attention on speaking and listening skills.

Table 2. Teacher evaluation of students' progress in five skills

Teacher	Lang	Speak & Listen	Reasoning	Metacognition	Manner	Open	All	Differ All
HH Begin	BM	1.50	1.40	1.00	1.50	1.33	1.35	1.95
End	F 4	2.33	3.00 [^]	4.00 [*]	3.50 [*]	3.67 [*]	3.30 [*]	
GSJBegin	BM	2.50	2.40	2.00	2.50	2.00	2.28	1.07
End	F 1	3.33 [*]	3.40 [*]	3.00 [^]	4.00 [*]	3.00 [^]	3.35 [*]	
GI Begin	BM	2.00	1.60	1.50	1.00	1.33	1.49	1.68
End	Y 4	3.33 [*]	3.00 [^]	3.00 [^]	3.50 [*]	3.00 [^]	3.17 [^]	
HZ Begin	Eng							
End	F 4	3.67 [*]	3.60 [*]	4.00 [*]	4.00 [*]	4.00 [*]	3.85 [*]	
GN Begin	Eng	2.17	2.20	2.50	2.00	2.33	2.24	0.62
End	Y 4	2.83 [^]	2.80 [^]	3.00 [^]	3.00 [^]	2.67 [^]	2.86 [^]	

Key: * good; ^ encouraging development.

The GSJ class had made great progress on speaking and listening skills, reasoning and manners; and the students were reported to have made encouraging progress on metacognition and open mindedness. Similarly, teacher GI reported that her class also demonstrated great progress on speaking and listening skills and manners, and students have made an encouraging development on reasoning, metacognition and open mindedness. Students from HZ class were described to have improved significantly in all of the skills. The findings also revealed that students from GN Class have made an encouraging progress in all of the skills. Generally, there was an

improvement in the mean of the five skills at the beginning and final stages. Teacher HZ did not have preliminary assessment data for pupils because there was a class change at the middle of this study. Obviously, the skills of discussion in the community of inquiry were reported to progress significantly especially among secondary school students as compared to primary schools. It is also significant to note that the progress in Bahasa Malaysia was higher than English subject. Figure 1 illustrates this progress.

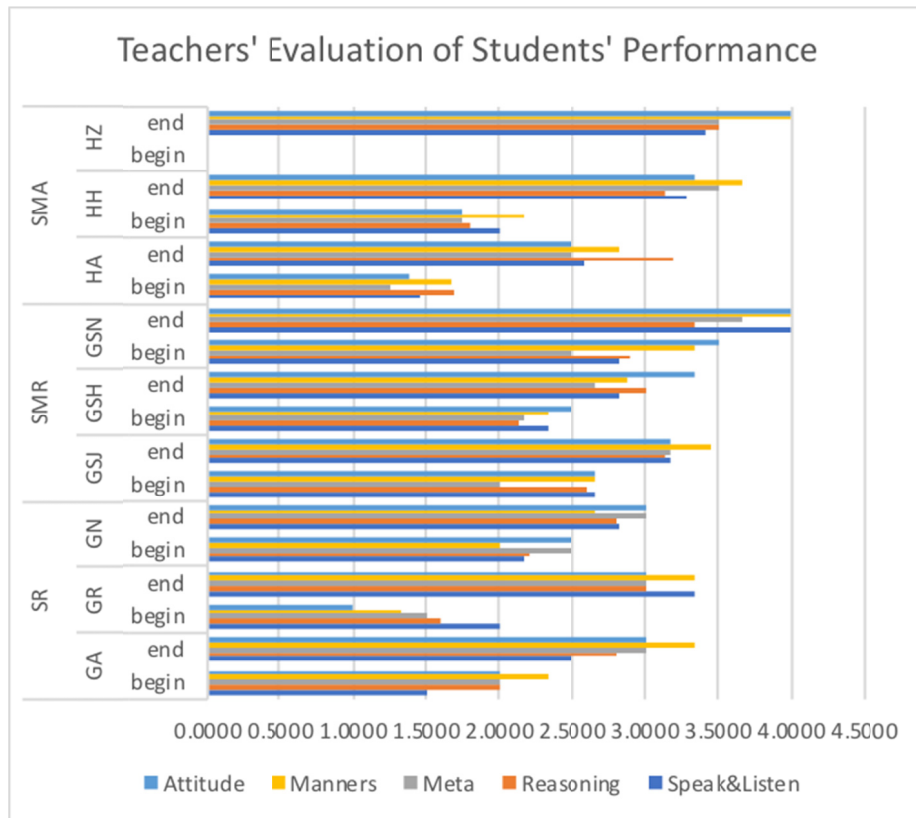


Figure 1. Evaluation of student progress by teachers at the beginning and the end of the study

3.3 Teachers' Views on the Impact of HP on Higher Order Thinking and Communication Skills

The data from teachers' observations revealed that students have learned how to communicate better. They were more courageous to speak and voice out their views relevant to current issues; more confident with themselves; more willing and involved in discussions to find solutions; and more fluent and proficient to write. Apart from communicating skills, students' critical thinking skills were also improved. This was indicated by the level of questions they have asked, that is, they asked more and more higher order thinking questions; the more ideas that they have generated and expressed in their essays; and they also displayed open-mindedness when receiving criticisms and dealing with disagreements.

3.3.1 Bahasa Malaysia Teachers

HH shared his experience of observing the first impact of community of inquiry on how students answered HOTS Questions compared to before the PH intervention: "So the students could present and voice out their views on current issues and ... I see two effects, first of all the answers to the HOTS questions. Before this PH intervention, students from this class did not answer all questions ... some of the students left the place for answer blank but with this Pedagogy of Hikmah, they tried to answer all questions and would not leave empty spaces". The second impact that can be seen was in writing skills. Before PH intervention, students used to write very short paragraphs in one page but after PH they could easily write long paragraph in one page. This means they already could think of a lot of ideas. HH shared that "The second good impact of PH on students' writing skills was previously students wrote short paragraphs and in one page they wrote 3 to 4 paragraphs. But now, they can write three quarters paragraphs per page. The essay that they wrote met the requirements of current issue and HOTS ... so previously they wrote based on the textbook, they wrote what was in the textbook ... but now they wrote about current issues ..."

These students were behaviourally and cognitively engaged in discussions and they have become more open-minded. According to GI, “Pedagogy of Hikmah is effective; this means teaching is not centered on me anymore. I talked less which means the students talked more than I. It means the students looked as if they were satisfied, because they can speak out, they can voice out their opinions”. This is also an indication that the students were emotionally engaged.

3.3.2 English Language Teachers

HZ, a Form 4 English teacher also shared similar experienced like Bahasa Malaysia teachers. He said, “Maybe because it was the 4th last class, so I thought they would not be able to speak, but when I gave them a chance to speak they were able to speak, although it was not grammatically correct ...”

The 4th year teacher GN explained about her class, “In English, prior to this, the pupils were silent, they were not speaking. But after HP, even though there used Malay language in the classroom, at least they were brave enough to say something and to hear my response so they can learn to speak and learn to construct sentences. To better compose the sentences”.

How can this change occur? During FGD, a teacher tried to explain this phenomenon by saying, “Because our learning technique was not like this, we cannot see or know that they have got ideas, but when they were in this community, they had to produce ideas. So, we saw that they can produce and share ideas, can give examples to clarify and explain. Previously, we teach and communicate more to the group, we cannot really evaluate each student, in a group, the few who are prominent control the group and stand out. Huh! usually the others just top-up by saying few words, just like that. But when it comes to Hikmah, everyone has to take part. So, each student must give his/her opinion. That's it”.

In fact, when students were discussing a question while in a community of inquiry, they developed the ability to listen to their peers' views which were explained and justified in details because every student who wishes to give opinions must provide evidences and justifications to support his or her opinions. In addition, they need to examine the truth value of claims made by other persons as well as the strength of the evidences put forward by others before they decide to agree or not to agree. This is what stimulates critical thinking. This differs from the other methods in which only teacher gives ideas and this would not create disagreement. Students may approve and adhere to the teacher as authority. When this happens, students are robbed from the opportunity to choose and make decision.

3.4 Teachers' Views on the Impact of HP on Students' Achievement and Classroom Engagement

In general, teachers were of the opinion that students were more actively involved in Hikmah sessions compared to in the conventional T&L sessions. There were also teachers who observed improvement in their students' achievement.

3.4.1 Bahasa Malaysia Teachers

GSJ explains, “I know one more thing, if we apply this HP for 7 straight months before finishing the syllabus, I do not think they need much time for revision to prepare for exams. Because the ideas, they are already in their mind. I noticed that Mutiara's students, their results were different this time ... they have improved lot. Before this, only one student could get an A, but now 5, 6 students obtained A ... But they really like it. They asked ... are we not going to do HP today?”

Data from the interviews indicated that teachers found Hikmah Pedagogy as a fun, engaging and effective pedagogy that encouraged students to engage in discussions and voice out the opinions. Students and teachers were happy with the HP sessions so much so that the students were looking forward to HP session. The teachers reported that students valued and enjoyed the different experience in HP sessions as compared to teaching methods which focused only on textbooks. The excitement of the T&L atmosphere was also felt by teachers. They acknowledged that HP involved collaboration between teachers and students. HP is not teacher-centered as well as not student-centered but community- and idea-centered.

In the opinion of HH, Form 4 Bahasa Malaysia teacher, “the Hikmah Pedagogy is fun for the students. I asked my students about HP and the student said it was fun method which was different from the method used before which was textbook-oriented”.

GSJ, Form 1 Bahasa Malaysia teacher, held similar view. She claimed, “this is a good lesson for the teacher as well as student. HP is very enjoyable. Because they can give their own opinions without being restrained or coerced by teachers and other things”. She added, “The students were very eager and could not wait for more PH sessions”.

Similarly, GI, Year 4 Bahasa Malaysia teacher said, “Okay for me this method is very interesting and effective.... I have conducted HP four times and already I notice changes in students. Now they have the courage to give opinion. The point is that if the students did not understand, they would raise their hands. HP is very effective and it was fun to see my students enjoy this program every time.”

3.4.2 English Language Teachers

In the opinion of HZ English Form 4 teacher, “... my class is the 4th last class, so I thought they would not be able to speak but surprisingly when I gave them the chance to voice out their views, they could speak although they made a lot of grammar mistakes. Right after the lesson some students approached me and said ‘teacher, this class was so interesting. I like the way you taught this class’”.

According to GN, Year 4 teacher, “I am happy teaching with this new method. Although this method is new, my students and I were excited about this new thing. ... when I use old methods, students were passive thus teacher has to give a lot of input. ... With this method, the students themselves were working together with teachers, sometimes teachers do not know much about certain topic. But the students said, they knew something new can be shared.”

During FGD, a teacher was explaining the difference between Hikmah Pedagogy from the method of group presentation; and she acknowledged the advantages of this pedagogy because students did not plan what to present instead they ask and answer questions with reasons spontaneously. She said, “Actually when we compared this method to the method of presentation, in group presentation, students plan and assign who to say what. If there are 5 students in a group, they plan so that all five of them can present. But in this Hikmah, they cannot prepare beforehand, so both teacher and students will have to be spontaneous in asking questions and giving answers. We can see that they can finally give good answer.”

4. Discussion

This study informs of the significance of HP approach as an intervention to promote discussion and support the development of students’ thinking and communication skills. It has shown that HP allows students to demonstrate their ability to give their opinion and to reason. This promotes the development of their communication skills in both languages as well. All five Bahasa Malaysia and English teachers involved in this study have given a positive outlook on HP. They found that HP was fun, engaging and effective to promote student engagement and learning. They reported positive changes among students, namely the increased interest in learning, the development of thinking and ideas, the ability to communicate better, the understanding of the ethics of disagreement, and the passive students had gained enough courage to participate in discussions. Both teachers and students also experienced on their own community-centered teaching method where students sit in seating arrangement that facilitates discussions.

Teachers discovered that HP through the community of inquiry could develop critical, creative, and collaborative thinking skills as well as interpersonal and communication skills that are indispensable for the future of the students. This pedagogy is found to give room for students to voice out opinions and brainstorm ideas among students. In fact, HP encourages students to come up with many ideas which significantly helped them in writing essays; to practice good ethics in discussions; and to improve their knowledge of current issues. This pedagogy focuses solely on students and not teachers. In addition, it helps to improve students’ academic performance especially in oral and written examination of Bahasa Malaysia and English Language. The teachers agreed the point that distinguished HP from other pedagogy is discussion in the Community of Inquiry.

In a nut shell, the teachers’ evaluation of students’ progress showed improvement in 21st century skills, specifically in the skills of (a) speaking and listening; (b) reasoning; (c) metacognition; (d) the community of inquiry; and (e) open mindedness. The academic achievement comparative test for Mid-Year and Year-End showed significant improvement for Form 4 English writing and comprehension; Year 4 English writing and oral; Form 4 Oral Bahasa Malaysia; and Year 4 Bahasa Malaysia writing and oral. Achievement for Form 1 Bahasa Malaysia cannot be attached because the teacher has moved to Form 2 after a few weeks of T&L.

In conclusion, this study recommends that HP should be extended to and practiced by educators in Malaysia for its many benefits. In order to overcome challenges in implementing HP, firstly, the Ministry of Education should reduce the content of the topic in syllabus so that the process in T&L comprising 5C skills that are relevant to the 21st century can be developed as intended by SBA. Secondly, this study attempted to correct the perceptions of certain quarters such as the School Committee and the School Assessors on the diversity of facilitating and learning methods in particular HP method since it supports development in thinking and communication skills.

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