A Case Study on the Implementation of Reflective Development Model in Improving Intercultural Competence Among Business Student in Stamford College

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Abstract:
This study was conducted to evaluate the implementation of reflective development model in improving the intercultural competence among business student in Stamford College. This study will be focus on the local and international students in terms of their cultural competencies through the globalization subjects. An embedded design of mixed methods was applied to conduct this study. The quantitative survey was conducted as the main method of this study and qualitative interview was done to enrich the data. The quantitative survey comprises 250 business students who currently enrolled in the subject of globalization and 10 were chosen for qualitative. This study implements the reflective model that's been suggested by Feng, 2016 which used in the traditional teaching atmosphere context to enhance intercultural competence for the undergraduate students emphasizing the personal development topic for the subject globalization. The model provides a pedagogical approach for motivating students to engage in intercultural interactions, which help them to learn the diverse environment and create awareness. The result shows positive effects on the adoption of the model. Findings of this study encourage the college students to be involved in interactions with students from different culture and ethnicities to experience new multicultural environments and improve their social skills through their interactions with diverse skills.
Keywords: Competence, Multicultural environment, Globalization.

1.0 Introduction

As we understand the changes in the globalization gives a lot of room to exchange students to learn the diversity and differences in the culture. Izumi (2010) mentioned that understanding the sense of other people's life is one of the main aims to go and study in another country. Lusting & Koester (2006) and Gao (2011), "the ability to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds is an important skill of both public and private people" Aidoo (2012), "to increase the fruitful relations with people from different backgrounds, students might be needing of several manners and skills, like tolerance and communication competence". The importance of the competence leads to a rapid change especially among the business students is to cope the pressure of diversity. Some university even includes managing diversity as one of the important topics in management subjects. The increasingly diversified workforce and global business outreach heighten the need for students to become intercultural competence (Morris, Krishna & Roberts, 2014). Aggarwal (2011) emphasis that to meet this trend, international business (IB) education, especially subjects like globalization has empathized that managers must develop international knowledge, personal leadership skills, and intercultural competence. However, this is the most difficult task for lecturers to implement the skills among the students. College students may face lack of motivation, initiative, or financial support for studying or living abroad (Clausen,2010). Beside this the traditional teaching environment is inadequate for learning the intercultural interactions. (Aidoo,2012). Some previous researchers illustrate the importance of daily interactions among students from different cultural and nationalities, and ask them to seize all opportunities to improve their personal and academic lives (Gao, 2011). Most of the researchers focus and conducted studies on the related issues but their findings are more relevant for the countries which have fundamental differences from Malaysia. There is a need and necessity to research in Malaysia since there is a track record of foreign students travelling to Malaysia to study is keeps increasing since 2005 (Najeemah,2008).

The aim of the study is to apply the reflective development model into the curriculum and to examine its potency for enhancing intercultural competence. The outcome will be one of the most importance factors for lecturers to improvised teaching methods and implementing the skills needed for students to be able to cope the rapidly changing business world which demanding students be more competent. Universities and colleges can be able to look into the pros and cons of integrating such diversity management as important elements and attributes in their current studies and enable students to upgrade themselves in terms of surviving in local and international context not only during study but during working with a diversity of culture. Business student may able to adopt and change themselves by improving their competence and skills to improve their lives personally and professional.

2.0. Literature Review

Globalisation, it has given a lot of room and possibilities to study in different countries with different background of culture and language. Bandura (2005) once mentioned that "we have to see how culture helps to create the meaning in the life of a person or community". Globalisation creates the culture of real virtuality by the integration of various ways of communication on to interactive networking that creates interactive society and makes big influence on social, economic, political and cultural life of society. William (2005), culture points out people's aspiration to understand them and create their communities. This is very applicable by most of the business subjects have 10% application of "world of work" concept integrated in student assignment to enhance the intercultural competence with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competence to be engaged with social and employment – related perspective and gives a person a motivation to learn and the variety of learning opportunities. Deardorff (2006), explain that intercultural competence has three different categories; knowledge, skills and abilities where knowing and understanding cultural dimensions, conditions and circumstances have a crucial impact on the quality of contact and interpersonal communication with foreign people especially business students. Aggarwal (2011) students need to reflect upon intercultural competences and intercultural learning that can be gain through overcoming ethnocentrism and increasing the sophistication in dealing with cultural difference. Students' awareness that there is a close relationship between cultural and the language in which the language formed is the important to emphasis in the communication process. Jamil & Raman (2012) mentioned that one of the most important elements to learn the culture is by learning the language; this can be implemented by foreign students learning Bahasa Melayu and Pengajian Malaysia for foreign students. This gives an opportunity for students to explore and understand the nature of each culture and this open the door for better intercultural competence (Najeemah , 2008). Williams (2005) support that intercultural competency "is a person's ability to communicate and interact with the representatives of another culture, group or community, therefore, it cannot be an isolated phenomenon". A teacher could help the students to recognise these segments of intercultural competency by using supervision an approaches of reflectivity and business teacher could develop this elements through group discussion and group interactions that they conduct during their lesson (Ramlee et.al., 2010). Chen & Starosta (2000) mentioned that intercultural competency can be easily develop among business students since they are learning globalisation , managing diversity and managing people as a part of their business subjects, and this also could be encouraged during the interaction in between classroom through a case study discussion or group assignment. Ramlee et.al (2010) agreed with it and says business lectures' should conduct the lesson more effective by learning different techniques in order to integrate this competence and by implementing "world of work" aspects in assignment to enhance their learning.

Reflective learning is one of the theory that always having essential for encouraging self – learning and critical thinking based on personal experience , (Kolb,2005) argued that personal experience is important in the transformation growth. According to Feng (2016) mentioned that reflective learning gives opportunity to students to explore and present their experience by describing, analysing, examining and presenting their experience which comprises four stages; awareness, experience, reflection and assessment.. The first stage is the awareness. Twenge (2014) mentioned that current era is well known as innovation zone and full use of technology among students where they easily obtain all the needed information through internet however this also create and block them becoming less engaging and aware of their own needs and identity. Developing competency will be more effective if it could be triggered by the curiosity and awareness within one individual's cognitive thoughts (Twenge, 2014). Therefore the stage of awareness will help students to self-analysis on themselves in area of intercultural competence and sensitivity (Deardoff, 2006). The second stage is the experience. Feng (2016) mentioned that reflective learning calls for students to gain personal experience once they establish a level of self-awareness, and also need students to leave the familiar culture and living in a foreign country. In this study we can see that there are students leaves their home country and study in Malaysia , and some travel from different state (rural area) and travel to city or metropolitan city and this is very applicable with business students as they travel adapt to new culture and environment as a part of globalisation nature (Hedberg ,2009). Experience stage allows students to interact with someone who from different background, region, ethnicity and experience. This experience and changing climate of their environment will challenge the students to become more sensitivity and curious about the diversity changes around them (Feng, 2016). This will be a push factor for students to read international news, interacting with international students, attending local cultural events, learning foreign language and even share the knowledge to their home country (Feng, 2016).

The third stage is reflection. Morris et. al. (2014), reflection is important and most challenging stage in the development process, it helps student compare themselves with others and then try to understand the different cultural background and competencies. This include reflection, awareness, and experience would fail to reveal the deep learning for self-directed assignment and the important component of the assignment is "student reflection on analysing their own performance" (Feng, 2016).To apply the part of the reflective learning, Kolb's model of reflection can be used by the simple question of describe, think, learn and act. At this stage student will more challenged to be aware and question their assumption. The final stage is the assessment stage, it is the final

stage of the development process where students can fully understand their competence and provide feedback for future academic and professional development (Feng, 2016). This stage is intended to improve on student improvement in intercultural competence by enhancing awareness of own self, sensitivity to cultural difference, motivates to interact with others and improving competencies. Feng (2016) added that students at this stage will improve learning by developing critical thinking and reflection skills.

3.0. Methodology

Since this study will replicate the model that been used by Feng (2016) which the elements and variable been adopted from Mendenhall et. al. (2012) Kozai group scale, intercultural effectiveness scale (IES) will be used. According to Mendenhall (2012), this scale is being considered as an effective, reliable and generalized measurement to evaluate the competencies and enable interaction with people from different background and culture. This IES scale is more relevant to access how well an individual's generation, religious, group and affiliation. These scales also include major three dimensions; continuous learning (CL), interpersonal engagement (IE) and hardiness (H) and 6 sub dimension; self-awareness, exploration, interpersonal engagement, global mindset, relationship interest, hardiness, hardiness, positive regard, emotional resilience.An embedded design of mixed methods was applied, and the main method for this study was quantitative surveyed and qualitative interview were done to enrich the data. The design was started through the quantitative survey then a simple interview. The entire data collection takes approximately 4 weeks. Mixed method is considered to be one of the best methods in identifying and get more in depth detail (Creswell & Plano, 2007).

The questionnaire was adopted from Feng (2016) were used for this study because of time limitation and to replicating the existing model students were required to fill the IES scale questionnaire based on Kozai group. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A for demographic analysis and section B more to the scale. In the questionnaire there are also some unstructured interview questions. This interview question was mainly focusing the 10 different cultural background students. The quantitative data were collected through simple random distribution of survey questionnaire to the participants. The qualitative interview were done direct and individually all the interviews were recorded. The location of data collection is done during the four weeks of the tutorial period of Globalisation subject, that is every Friday, 10.30 to 12 noon. The quantitative survey had 250 students as participants and 10 students were selected for interview was those business students whom enrolled for the module of Globalisation. The business students comprise of different major; Management, Finance and Accounting, Marketing, International Business and Human Resource. There are total of 250 participants; 140 students are local and 110 are international students. The 10 students were selected based on their countries, since each student will represent their home country. International students of this study belonged to 10 different countries, religious and ethnicity background.

This personal intercultural competence development was a part of the globalization assignment which student required to submit on their 13th week of study. Students were briefed on the assignment on the first week and the purpose of the study was explained clearly to all the students. Student was clearly explained on the IES scale and each of the items and mentioned that they required answering it honestly. Students get more in-depth knowledge on the intercultural competence in the 3rd of their lecture period. Since student required doing a written report, reflective learning style was also been explained clearly. In this period students was also given a constructive feedback and class behaviour review and helps students to improve on their behaviour. Some interactive discussion on the different culture, critical thinking and problem solving method was implemented during the tutorial slot to enhance learning. Most of the class exercise requires students to reiterated Kolb's learning cycle by explaining; describe, think, learn and act. Students also required engaging themselves with intercultural experience by learning different culture through internet and media.

4.0. Findings

At the end of week 15th, student's improvement in the intercultural competence and the effectiveness of reflective model was evaluated.

4.1. Demographic analysis

Table 1: Demographic information on participants

Variables	Malaysia respondents	International respondent	percentage
Respondent Malaysian International	140	110	56 44
Gender Male Female	60 80	77 33	42.8;70 57.2;30
Age 18 – 22 23- 29 >30	138 2	32 77 1	98.5;29 1.5;70 -; 1

Based on the descriptive test for demographic information this study had total participants of 250 from both local and international students as 140 local and 110 international students. From 140 participants 60 were male respondents and 80 are female respondents with (57.2%). There are 77 (70%) of male and 33 (30%) of international female students. The test also shows that local student age mostly fall in between the group of 18 to 22 about 138 (98.5%) and only 2 students are in the age group of 23 – 29 (1.5%). However this is different when compared to the international students where most of them fall into the categories age of 23- 29 about 77 students (70%) and one students above 30 and the rest of the students are in the age group of 18 -22.The highest international female students are from China 21 and no female students from Pakistan, Sudan, Iraq and Sri Lanka. The highest male students are from China and Nigeria, both has 21 respondents with one participant from Iraq. There are 21 Malay Malaysian female and 28 male, 33 Chinese Malaysian female and 28 male, 24 Indian Malaysian female and 6 male. There are only 2 female respondents are belonging to the group of other – Malaysian which from the Sarawak with a background of Bidayuh.(refer to table 1, appendix 1). The next section Anova test is been used. Anova is used to measure within subject changes in mean scores over a separated time points. In this study Anova test will be used to test the differences between the pre and post of IES score.

Table 2: Anova analysis for pre and post IES.

	Before		After		
Dimension	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Differences**
A. Continuous Learning	4.17	0.47	4.35	0.41	.18***
1. Self-Awareness	3.96	0.51	4.33	0.41	.37***
2. Exploration	4.33	0.55	4.52	0.43	.19
B. Interpersonal Engagement	3.21	0.74	3.64	0.55	.42***
3. Global Mind-set	2.12	0.83	2.67	0.79	.55***
4. Relationship Interest	3.75	0.78	3.90	0.64	.015
C. Hardiness	3.00	0.63	3.03	0.66	.03
5. Positive regard	2.88	0.53	3.03	0.71	.15***
6. Emotional Resilience	2.26	0.86	3.35	0.82	.09
Overall Score	**3.41**	**0.48**	**3.63**	**0.35**	**.22****

**p <.05, ***p<.001

Table 2 shows, the group achieved significant improvement when overall pre and post IES compared (Pre: 3.41; Post: 3.63, p< .05). At the dimensional level, all the three dimensions shows a significant increase, continuous learning (Pre: 4.17; Post: 4.35, p< .01) and interpersonal engagement (Pre: 3.21; Post: 3.64, p< .01) increased with a differences more than (.18 to .37) however hardiness shows a very little increment by .03.

At the sub dimensional level, the group showed improvement in self-awareness (Pre: 3.96; Post: 4.33, p< .01).The highest is global mind-set (Pre: 2.12; Post: 2.67, p< .05). In addition, the test shows no gender differences for each dimension. The overall score shifted from lower to higher score. At dimensional level student score hardiness as a low score and sub dimensional student score higher for exploration and lower for emotional resilience.

4.2. Qualitative analysis

The pre and post-test provided an objective and quantitative measurement of student improvement. This added more relevant source to enrich the data. Students provide data of activities that utilised to develop the intercultural competence in their home environment and offered more in depth insight. Descriptive coding was used to meet the exploratory purpose of the study. The qualitative data analysis shows that students achieved their interpersonal engagement or relationship interest by being challenged out of their comfort zone. The

experiences that each every student share is after they go through the lecture class of inter cultural management and intercultural competency in the week 3 of classes. Each student become more closer and try to get to know each other through the classroom discussion and group activity that taken place during the four weeks of the survey being conducted. A China student, wrote

"I start to make relationship with students from different culture especially the Chines – Malaysian to improve my English. I step outside of my own comfort zone of being with my own culture friends. I also try to go out with some of them to learn new places and things. These Chinese- Malaysian students' friends introduce me with their other friends, Indian – Malaysian and Malay- Malaysian. Some of them even invited me to their house to hangout, I visited one of my Malay- Malaysian friend house during Raya celebration. This really helps us grow closer and create a relationship as friends. I enjoyed and want to try to do new assignment with them next semester."

This analysis help the student to understand cross cultural context. Some student expanded their learning of new culture by exploring places that did not interest them in the past. A student from Pakistan wrote about his unusual experience that he had through visiting a place alone. He wrote; "It is very difficult for me to see other cultures as legitimate because I am a very ethnocentric person. I am not shy of saying that. My course of action stops me from being mixed with others from different culture and especially Indian students in my class. But the group discussion and the Indian in my group behave very nice, understanding and helpful, this change my rancor towards Indians slowly faded away since they were very polite and nice. This incident gives me opportunity to change and to mix around and stop judging any person based on their culture".

The exercise challenged students to question their assumption where they become more open minded and less judgemental about other behaviours. A student from Jamaica wrote that; "I always use to be quiet and alone since I was the only Jamaican girl in the course. I even heard some Malaysian student commented on my dressing and says that we have rude behaviour, but all this perception change during the group activity that taken place in the class. I meet new friends and I am no longer alone. There are very helpful. This activity makes me realise that the comment that I heard is not right".

This activity has create a new friendship and open an opportunity for students to mingle this been proven additional by Iranian students. Iranian student wrote that; "I was very lonely because I am the only one Iranian student doing this course, most of my friends are doing IT course. Most of time I feel very lonely and always waited for lunch break so I can meet my friends. But this activity gives me opportunity to know new friends .I started to mix with my friends"

Beside this Sri Lanka students feel happy after get to know that Malaysian – Indian are accepting them well. The Sri Lanka students wrote; "I was very happy because I use to hang with my group of friends only. The best part is that in my college only three of us are from Sri Lanka. We rarely speak to Indian students because we feel insecure and worried that they would not accepting us, but then I was very shock that they treat us well during the activity and share more with us. Now all of us are joining with each other through whatsapp"

Most of the students realise the changes and open up room to be connected with others. This shows that the assignment helps students capture subtle events relating to intercultural interactions and a mixture of international with the local students. The guided reflection process allowed them to be more sensitive to their environment, enable them to engage in reflective observation and assisted them in achieving intellectual learning. It shows that students become more open – minded, respectful and curious about the environment.

5.0. Discussion

The given exercise was something new and challenging since it was the first time such an activity been incorporated with assignment. Normally as a lecturer feedback will be provided on student assignment ,but then this assignment gives opportunity for lecture to explore their own students. This session provide an opportunity to excess students by providing individual review, feedback and clear instruction. Case study and discussion method actually enhance teaching and learning experience in the class. More time was spend on the debriefing of the exercise and allows students to reflect their skills. This assignment has strengthened the lecturer student relationship. Overall the reflective development model showed positive results. The assignment proved that students had improvement their intercultural competence in their home environment by applying the four stage development model; awareness, experience, reflection and assessment. The IES score proven that there is increment after students aware on the importance of intercultural competence, this also enable students to deal with real intercultural challenges in future work place. The study also shows that we can improve self – awareness and global mindset which help them to further development of their adaptability (Ang et.al., 2001).Many intercultural education programs provided experience but lack necessary self-awareness and reflection for deep learning. Reflecting on the learning theory, this study provides globalisation students to improve intercultural competence in the home environment. The model seems to be applicable and relevant which in every stage it enable students to learn and translate their personal experience to the real world practices. Therefore, study abroad programs should incorporate the relevant assignment.

6.0 Conclusion and limitation of study

The major limitation of t study is that it focuses on very limited number of students which is 250 and 110 international students. A wider research could provide more relevant and adequate information. Next the time taken for the entire assignment is nearly 14 weeks of all together and additional case study and discussion been conducted. The future study can explore more on intercultural competence among different major groups of study; Management, marketing, finance and other. This study never focuses on how a Malaysian student finds the intercultural activities that conducted in class and the impacts of such activities.Business and Management lectures are challenged to develop intercultural competence and especially those who are teaching the globalisation subject. Integration of the theory enables to enhance and improve intercultural competency. Students seem to enjoy the assignment since it able them to reflect on their personal experience. Therefore the pedagogical approach gives opportunity to student engagement in classroom.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Breakdown of students based on the nationality and ethnic

Country of respondent	Female	Percentage	Male	percentage
Malay Malaysian	21	26.2	28	46.7
Chinese Malaysian	33	41.3	26	43.3
Indian Malaysian	24	30	6	10
Others Malaysian	2	2.5	0	0
Total	**80**	**100**	**60**	**100**
China	21	63.7	21	27.3
Indonesia	3	9.10	12	15.6
India	1	3.03	3	3.9
Nigeria	6	18.2	21	27.3
Pakistan	0	0	2	2.6
Sudan	0	0	2	2.6
Jamaica	1	3.03	12	15.6
Iraq	0	0	1	1.3
Singapore	1	3.03	0	0
Sri Lanka	0	0	3	3.9
Total	**33**	**100**	**77**	**100**