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Gabriele Strohschen
Editor

Handbook of Blended Shore Education

Adult Program Development
and Delivery

 Springer

Editor

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Chapter 7

Higher Education Health Program at Airlangga University

Seger Handoyo, Fajrianthi, and Achmad Syahrani

Higher Education Health Program

The Higher Education Health Program at Airlangga University in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia has been recognized by the Malaysian government. Airlangga University started to offer the Higher Education Health Program to Malaysian students in 2002. This program is administered by the faculty of medicine, dentistry, and pharmacy. The Department of Medicine at Airlangga University was founded in 1913 during the Dutch colonial time when it was called *Nederlande Indische Artsen School (NIAS)*. The Faculty of Dentistry was also established during Dutch era in 1928 and was called *School Tot Opleidig van Indische Tandartsen (STOVIT)* (Universitas Airlangga, 2004). In 1963, the Department of Pharmacy was founded.

Those three departments provide both academic and professional education programs leading to degrees and certifications for doctor, dentist, and pharmacist (Universitas Airlangga, 2007b). The main reason for admitting students from Malaysia is to move toward international recognition and to have programs accredited by the Malaysian government. In the last five years, many students came from Malaysia to Indonesia to study at Airlangga University or other universities. Malaysian students participate in the Higher Education Health Program at Airlangga University together with those from Indonesia and *Bahasa Indonesia* is used in instruction, because they have to engage and practice with Indonesian people.

This medical educational program takes five years to finish within three, sequential stages, based on the prerequisite of successful completion of each phase in this competence-based curriculum. The courses involve integrated modules, problem-based learning, and medical skill practice. The medical educational competence focuses on main areas that foster academic knowledge, professional skills, and personal development. For example, clinical skills are valued as much as the ability to utilize, judge critically, and manage information or developing lifelong learning skills.

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The dentistry educational program takes five years to finish with its two stages of an academic component and a professional education program. The educational offerings are aimed at shaping attitude, knowledge, and skills to perform professional duties of a dentist in accordance with the criteria of the Indonesian health service system. This system emphasizes humanistic and ethical guidance for patients. It stresses preventive, curative, and rehabilitative approaches at the individual and community level. A team approach to wholistic community health along with the mandate to engage in Continuing Professional Education to improve dentistry practice in line with current scientific and technological progress is a highly valued competence.

The pharmacy higher educational program takes five years, or eight semesters, to finish within two stages of pharmacy, apothecary, and professional education. The graduate level content is delivered in the form of lectures, tutorials, practical/field work, problem-based learning, and a thesis. Graduates are awarded *Sarjana Farmasi* (Pharmacy Diploma), which makes graduates eligible to continue their study directly in pharmacist professional education. Those who continue their study after more than a four-semester postponement must pass a selection test in order to be able to join the Apothecary professional program. This program takes two semesters with 30 credits to finish and has two majors: hospital and pharmacy industry. The courses are given in lectures, professional fieldwork at a government institution, and apothecary and professional fieldwork at a hospital or in the pharmacy industry for two to three months.

The graduates of the pharmacist professional program at Airlangga University graduate with general clinical competence of pharmacology as much as with the knowledge of comprehensive approaches that ensure patient education and community health.

Currently, there are about 166 students from Malaysia, who study at Airlangga University (Universitas Airlangga, 2005, 2006, 2007a). The number will grow in the next years as Airlangga University increases its faculty capacity. Airlangga University is also expanding its program offerings and in 2007, the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine started to admit Malaysian students.

Problems and Alternative Solutions

The problems for Malaysian students is their low GPA, on average they have a GPA of 2.66 on a 1–4 scale. This GPA is not satisfactory in relation to the demands from the professional field in Malaysia, which stands at a minimum 2.75. This situation needs to be addressed adequately. The GPA will also affect the general performance of the Higher Education Health Program at Airlangga as a whole. In this case, the Malaysian students' academic standing could be an unfavorable factor for the university to attain international recognition. Thus, it is urgent to find out the causes and take concrete steps to solve the problem.

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The result from the focus group discussion with Malaysian students shows that self-adaptation contributes to the low GPA. There are at least three main problems related to the adjustment; language adaptation, class size, and friendship. Besides, there is also a problem that relates to food preferences.

The problem of adjustment during their early study time is in understanding the written, spoken, and non-verbal Indonesian language well. It is true that *Bahasa Malaya* and *Bahasa Indonesia* have a lot in common so that there are only few problems in informal situations. However, in formal situation, especially in the learning and teaching process, those two similar languages create a significant problem such that the students find it difficult to write a report, which is easy to understand by the lecturer. More than that, speaking styles and non-verbal communications by the lecturers are quite different from Malaysian ones since most of the lecturers are Javanese.

Smalley and Hank (1992) said that students with teachers from their same culture have little problem to understand the cues provided by the teacher and the appropriate inter-actional behaviors expected in the classroom. Those students and teachers from different cultures do not know the rules of each other's cultural rules and have difficulty interpreting correct teacher-student interactions. Effective teaching is more likely to take place if both the teacher and student are aware of the benefits of integrating appropriate instructional materials that correspond with culturally congruent and learning styles.

Naturally, this language problem cannot be solved by the students themselves in about one semester. Nevertheless, the low achievement in the first semester will affect their self-efficacy. In turn, this low self-efficacy will make it hard for the faculty and the students themselves to achieve better in the next semester. Thus it is necessary for the Malaysian students to receive some Indonesian language training, both spoken and written, in order to help them write reports and answer written examinations early during their study.

Another problem, which is directly related to the teaching and learning process is the big size class. Students from Malaysia mostly come from high schools in Malaysia, which have small classes with 15–20 students, and the learning process tends to be highly individualized. On the contrary, at Airlangga University, they often have to attend classes with as many as 100 students. This influences their capability to learn.

Some lecturers have tried to give extra hours for Malaysian students who have difficulties with the big class. This has provided some relief. However, some students feel too afraid to meet some 'ill-tempered' lecturers. Some lecturers have problems controlling their emotions, so they easily get angry and are not patient to manage the classroom and instruction appropriately. Students often end up trying to do self-study using textbooks.

Research done by Lahur and Nurtjahja (2002) found that in Indonesia the availability of an environment in classrooms, which encourages the development of relationship, awareness, and trust among lecturers and students is not enough. Most of the time, classes are conducted with one-way communication. Two-way communications happens in question and answer sessions. A lecturer asks a question of the whole class, and most of the time students will not answer the question voluntarily,

especially in big classes. In this kind of class, the challenges on the instructor to encourage students' activity and response is greater than in the small class. Students from Malaysia who are the minority in the class will tend to dissolve in such a class as they have a similar Asian culture with Indonesian students. Feng (1994) said that Asian children may not volunteer to participate in the classroom until specifically asked by the teacher. Drawing attention to oneself by virtue of misbehaving might cause great distress and result in "losing face" because children are taught to value silence, listen more than speak, speak softly, and be modest in dress and behavior. This learned behavior seems to carry over to later learning settings.

Sheerin (1997) suggested that students have to feel a need for greater responsibility and ownership of their learning. Thanasoulas (2000) suggested that students should be autonomous learner. They need to learn to increase initiative in seeking out information rather than using the teacher as the sole source, and applying their knowledge across faculty boundaries. The presence of Malaysian students might be used by lecturers to encourage a change in learning culture, although this is a relatively difficult task because Malaysians share many things in common with Indonesians. Nevertheless, the presence of foreign students may boost the change. Thus, it is necessary for the teacher to create a safe environment for Malaysian students so that they may express their opinions freely in the classroom.

Lahur and Nurtjahja (2002) said that students who have teachers from their same culture have little problem understanding the cues provided by the teacher. Students will already be familiar with the appropriate inter-actional behaviors expected in the classroom. Some students are from cultures with values that promote field dependence (a more community oriented style), while students from other cultures are inclined to be field independent, which encourages independence and competition. With proper instruction, field-dependent and field-independent students can learn to recognize their preferences; that is, their learning styles can be identified and expanded to function appropriately in any given situation. Teachers need to provide activities that incorporate all types of learning styles. In addition, if they are aware of their own cultural learning styles and preferences, teachers will be better prepared to recognize and address the learning preferences of their students. The lecturer needs to use a personal approach to Malaysian students so that the lecturer will understand their culture and learning styles better. Besides, this approach will generate the feeling of being accepted psychologically. In turn, this will help Malaysian students feel more comfortable to study. If students are uncomfortable in class, they may become bored, unresponsive, or test poorly (Felder and Henriques, 1995). Hence, the sense of being accepted will greatly influence students' motivation and learning behavior. This increase in learning motivation will boost their academic achievement.

Some lecturers may perceive students from Malaysia as being able to solve their own problems. This may be caused by stereotyping that those students are coming from a fast growing country so that there is no need to worry about them. In this case, Malaysian students have a problem of being thought of by their lecturers as being able to solve their own problems.

Lecturers may also view that Malaysian students are the same as those from Indonesia since the cultures are quite similar. In this sense, the lecturers may not pay

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Lesson I

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attention to small differences which in fact are significant and become a problem for Malaysian students.

If lecturers or the faculty has a wrong assumption concerning Malaysian students, because of stereotyping, then they will treat the students wrongly, too. Mainstream teachers are often at odds with their diverse students because they are unaware of the differing cultural values among students in the classroom. To promote effective teaching, teachers need to plan curriculum and instruction to incorporate the learning styles of their students.

Thus the problems caused by big class size may be overcome in several ways: lecturers should give more personal attention to Malaysian students, avoid stereotyping, and understand each student individually to help the student cope with the adjustments. Besides, lecturers should also promote Malaysian students' feeling of being accepted by the whole class to create a comfortable atmosphere for learning. Lecturers should try to make use of the foreign students to help Indonesian students change their learning culture. Although in the future the faculties are going to conduct small size classes, adequate attention should be maintained toward Malaysian students, in part, by utilizing culturally relevant instruction.

Another problem the Malaysian students experience is the loose relationship between Malaysian and Indonesian students. Close relationships and friendships play a significant role in their adjustment to the Indonesian learning culture. Yet, they experience a big difference between relationships with co-students who live in the same boarding house and those on campus. On campus, they feel that there is a distance between Malaysian and Indonesian students. They do not blend in and, in turn, become an exclusive community. It particularly hinders sharing important information about the course. For instance, local students may have information on a particular lecturer's character or have notes that are easier to understand than the course literature. Such peer-support is an important aspect in student learning because a close relationship that generates sharing information can contribute to academic success.

The academic success of students is not only determined by how well lecturers know the culture, learning style, and cognitive style of the students. The students are also required to understand lecturers' character and habits.

The faculty can create a special program that promotes a warm interaction between Malaysian and Indonesian students. Such a program includes extracurricular activities for students from both cultures, such as a study group. Another example is a tutorial from senior Indonesian students to both Indonesian and Malaysian ones.

A difference in food preferences has contributed to the academic achievement. It cannot be seen as a simple problem, since eating problems may lead to health problems. Some Malaysian students stated that it takes four months to adapt to Indonesian foods, particularly the spicy ones.

Lesson Learned

Malaysia and Indonesia have a similar culture since they come from the same Malay root culture. In general, they believe that success in life associates with what they have learned at school. Therefore, formal education determines someone's career.

Interaction with others and support from family are also important aspects in this culture (Trueba and Cheng, 1993). Academic achievement and upward mobility are "viewed as an obligation for the maintenance of the family, which is the responsibility of all family members" (Pang, 1990). Additionally, Asian parents teach their children to respect authority, hold responsibility toward extended family, and show self-control.

Considering such cultural background, Malaysian students need an adaptation when they are studying in Indonesia, though the root of the culture is similar. Particularly, each nation has its own history that contributes to the subculture. That has generated differences between Indonesia and Malaysia. Furthermore, Malaysian students vary in ethnicity. Malaysia is comprised of 50% native Malays, 35% Chinese, 10% Indians (especially Tamils from Southern India), and 5% indigenous people (along with Malays they are referred to as *Bumiputera* – people generally aboriginal in their origins). Malaysian students who are studying at Airlangga University come from native Malays, Chinese, and Indian backgrounds.

The adjustment process is necessary because students now live far from their family, yet, in fact, they still depend on their family. They also have the burden to be successful in their study and prove it to the family and it is common that students try hard to finish their school in order to make parents be proud. The other adjustment is related to Indonesia's culture and academic process. The relationship between Indonesian and Malaysian students is important. In fact, Malaysian students experience difficulties in making friendships with their co-students from Indonesia. This issue affects their sense of comfort while they are on campus. They feel more comfortable in a boarding house than on campus.

The failure in academic achievement, which is identified by low GPA, would generate parents' anger, as they believe that their children are not serious in their study. The students may respond to the situation by studying harder. However, if the achievement does not improve significantly, they may lose their self-confidence or escape to non-academic activities, which in turn may result in poor study habits and lower the GPA. In fact, there are a lot of possibilities for students from higher education to become involved in off-campus organizations and the activities are positive for them. Yet, the involvement may contribute to low academic performance.

According to Atwater (1983), adjustment consists of three elements; self, others, and change. Simply put, adjustment consists of the changes in us and our circumstances necessary to achieve a satisfactory relationship with others and with our surroundings. Adjustment does not only pass through changing ourselves to suit the environment, but can also be done by changing the surroundings to our needs.

The adjustment problems of Malaysian students cannot be solved solely by themselves. The university and the faculty have to overcome the issues in a structured and systematic way. They should prepare a cross-cultural program and education design, starting from academic preparation for foreign students, language training, psychological, and cultural support services, and cross-cultural training for lecturers. Individual understanding about each student is important to assist them in exploring their intellectual, emotional, and spiritual potency. A successful exploration would generate academic achievement and other kinds of achievement, which will

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influence personal growth. Essentially, personal growth refers to change or development in a desirable direction (Atwater, 1983). We usually say someone has "grown as a person" when he or she becomes more understanding, competent, responsible, and considerate of others. The personal growth would contribute to a success in career and life.

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