

THE ROLE OF DAILY INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION AMONG STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT CULTURES AND COUNTRIES ON ENHANCEMENT OF COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AT MALAYSIAN UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Collaborative learning among students of different cultures and countries at university environment is one of the most essential requirements of all modern higher education institutions including Malaysian universities. Therefore, this research project examined various aspects of daily interpersonal communication (IPC) between local and international students of University Malaysia Pahang (UMP), including effects of their daily IPCs on the level of collaborative learning among them. A quantitative survey was conducted as the main method of this study and qualitative interviews were nested to it to enrich the data. The quantitative survey had 220 participants equally from both Malaysian and international students of UMP, and also from both local and international participants, 12 of them were interviewed for the qualitative data. Findings of this study illustrated that daily IPCs between local and international students of UMP enabled both Malaysian and international students to have enough daily collaborative activities at the university environment with students of different cultures and nationalities. Also, findings of this study may highlight the ways for both university students and university policymakers to increase the level of collaborative learning at the university environments. However, further studies on the related issues studies recommended as well.

Field of Research: *Interpersonal communication; interactions; Collaborative learning; Local and international students; Malaysian universities*

1. Introduction

Interpersonal communication (IPC) is a key factor for students of higher education institutions to build their capacity, have better opportunities of collaborative learning, and gain some essential communicative skills. In common learning, increasing of interpersonal communication abilities is the main precondition of collaborative education that has been mentioned to be positively effective on self-reported gains of students in knowledge and problem-solving (Astin, 1993; Light, 2001 cited in Aidoo, 2012). At the same time, good skills of interpersonal communication will pave the ways for students to find good jobs and be more successful in their future careers as well. As argued by Aidoo (2012) interpersonal relations or understanding at university may improve individual and professional lives of students.

Although, some researchers (e.g. Baryant, 2012; Izumi, 2010; Huang, 2010) conducted some studies on the related issues, but their research themes and findings belong to cultural and educational styles and norms of western countries like the United States and cannot cover the real communicative situation