

A STUDY TO DESCRIBE THE PERFORMANCE
OF UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN
THE DISTRICT OF ULU SELANGOR IN THE
ACQUISITION OF BASIC ECONOMIC CONCEPTS

BY

SITI HADUAH HAJI JALALUDIN



106512

106512

NOVEMBER 1994

ABSTRACT

The problem of this study was: What is the performance of upper secondary school students in the district of Ulu Selangor in the acquisition of Basic Economic concepts?

The purpose of this study was to describe the performance of the samples selected in the acquisition of Basic Economic concepts. Specifically, this study was aimed in describing the students' performance in the acquisition of basic economic concepts according to the three levels of cognitive domain: (a) students' knowledge level on fundamental, microeconomic, macroeconomic and international economic concepts (b) students' comprehension level on fundamental, microeconomic, macroeconomic and international economic concepts and (c) students' application level on fundamental, microeconomic, macroeconomic and international economic concepts.

In carrying out this study a survey method was employed. To describe the performance of upper secondary school students in the acquisition of economic concepts, the researcher had adapted a Test of Economic Knowledge (TEK), a paper and a pencil test. This instrument was translated to the National Language. This was to facilitate the subjects in their responses since English Language is a second language in Malaysia. This instrument was administered in three secondary schools in the district of Ulu Selangor. It involved a total of 230 upper secondary school students who took Basic Economics as their elective subject. Using a Descriptive Statistic analysis; percent correct and overall mean, the data gathered from the respondents were analyzed and reported.

The findings of the study are: (a) students' performance in the fundamental economic concepts according to the knowledge, comprehension and application level ranged between average to above average; overall mean was between 51-65; (b) students' performance in the microeconomic concepts ranged between below average to average level; overall mean was between 44-57; (c) students' performance in macroeconomic concepts also ranged between below average to average level; overall mean was ranged between 45-59; (d) students' performance in the international economic concepts ranged between average to above average level; overall mean ranged between 50-70; (e) on the whole, students' performance in the acquisition of basic economic concepts according to the three levels of cognitive domain was at an average level.

The study also discussed implications on the teaching-learning process of basic economic concepts. Suggestions such as the study to be replicated at national level, in-service courses for economic teachers, more studies to determine effective teaching practices and to enhance economic knowledge among teachers have been recommended.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Basic Economics is one of the elective subjects, introduced by the Curriculum Development Center into all secondary schools; Form Four and Five. Basic Economics is a new subject introduced in 1992 in the Integrated Curriculum Secondary School (ICSS). The introduction of this subject is a result from research and exploratory studies on students' performance in Form Six Economics. These findings have succeeded in convincing the curriculum planners to introduce Economics in the lower secondary to equip students with knowledge in Basic Economics concepts (Sheffie & Faridah, 1993). This study will enable the researcher to ascertain the performance of upper secondary school students in the acquisition of Basic Economic concepts. Banks and Clegg (1974) states that the acquisition of economics concepts will lead to economic understanding. Economic understanding has a great importance to an individual and the nation.

Economics problems are at the heart of any nation, whatever its ideology of stage of development. Many economic questions facing the individual and society cannot be answered satisfactorily without a major contribution from economics (Yip Yat Hoong, 1967). Consequently, there is a need on the part of every individual to have a certain level of economic competency or understanding. It has been justifiably said that a nation will be better served if everyone is well-informed and can think clearly and objectively about economic questions (National Task Force, 1961).

Economics concerns all of us and is part of our everyday life in numerous ways. As such it is a vital, practical and personal aspect of the society and of our daily life. The

importance of economic knowledge and understanding should not be overlooked for the following reasons:

As Malaysia is gearing towards achieving the nine challenges by the year 2020, the complexity of modern economic problem is ever increasing. As society and its economic system develop, the problem of making a living and the problem of educating the young to make a living has become more complex. Society becomes more impersonal, industrialized and more sophisticated. This inevitably requires every individual to have knowledge and skills to enable him or her to make intelligent decisions or to take intelligent action pertaining to economic matters. It can safely be asserted that in order to understand the modern world we would require some familiarity with the social structure, the political structure and not the least important, the economic workings of our complex society (Lewton & Dofer, 1973).

Many of the problems faced by society are economic in nature whether partially or primarily. Policies on taxation, housing, trade, equitable participation in businesses, trade unionism and a host of other public questions or issues that are debated or discussed in the daily newspaper or over the radio and television amply illustrate the extent to which important present-day problems are economic in nature. The problems are enough to convince us that economic competence is essential to their solutions.

The nature of our individual or personal problems, too, is partly economic. We face economic struggle in our daily life. Everyone of us is confronted with the same problem of choice. We have to make personal decisions regarding occupations, allocation of our limited income to purchase necessities and luxuries, investments and savings and a myriad

of other difficult economic decisions (Quelette, 1964). Intelligent and desirable solutions to these problems necessitate some economic understanding.

Our Malaysian society and way of life is dedicated to the principle of democracy. The health and well-being of a democratic society like ours is becoming more and more dependent upon the understanding of its citizens of the political and economic processes.

As was mentioned earlier that the introduction of Basic Economics subject in secondary schools is a result from research and exploratory studies on students' performance in Form Six Economics. Apart from that, economics should be taught as an organized subject in order to increase the students' understanding of the economy and to develop their capacity to use rational and objective analysis in making decisions on economic matters (Yip Yat Hoong, 1967). Hence, in fulfilling this, Basic Economics provides students with basic knowledge in economics in order that they understand problems resulting from limited resources and how to optimize the use of these resources (Curriculum Development Center, 1991). Students will also have an understanding of the role of the individual as a consumer and producer in society, as well as understand the effects of economic growth on the nation. Silcock (1959) argued that it was important to educate the citizens in the fundamentals of economics because if the governmental policy makers in Malaysia operated in the context of an informed public opinion their action would be more effective and better understood.

In a world where men's lives are increasingly interdependent in economic affairs and where local, national and international issues are significantly economic in nature, economic understanding on the part of every individual, whatever his or her intellectual