

A BASELINE SURVEY TO MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF AN EDUCATIONAL CAMP IN BRUNEI DARUSSALAM

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1. INTRODUCTION

In the year 2000s when digital games were not as accessible as today, outdoor activities were always sought after among youngsters, especially during school breaks. This includes camps in general, and science camps in particular, where students can benefit from the scientific knowledge conveyed and skills gained. Would science camps still popular now? Would there be any data to compare? More importantly, were there any differences between the past participants and current enthusiasts? To answer these questions, a common instrument needs to be employed. The instrument that can be used by camp organisers is using survey, to gather participant's perceptions and to improve the camp's organisation.

In 2003, a survey was conducted with a group attending the 12th Brunei Association for Science Education (BASE) National Science camp. BASE is a voluntary body managed by a group of committed and dedicated Executive Committee members. BASE has organised national science camps since 1989, sponsored by the Brunei Shell Petroleum Company Limited. For the past sixteen years, there has been no initiative to quantitatively investigate the effect of BASE activities on participating students. With the support of a former BASE President, a pioneering research survey was conducted to investigate students' feedback from the 12th BASE National Science Camp 2003. The outcomes of this data is relevant to date for comparative studies, especially due to the limited local documentations of science programmes, particularly those that are conducted by non-government associations.

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Furthermore, the feedback of this data may become an impetus to the current NGOs to conduct more programmes (in particular, the science camps) in supporting Brunei Vision 2035.

The survey was designed based on participatory observation of previous research studies. Nevertheless, this survey received a high rate of return from participants and acted as a preliminary investigation: further surveys will apply statistical calculations for comparison and relationship studies. According to Bell (1993: p. 6), '[those] adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand individuals' perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis.' Hence, the outcomes of the survey will be useful for future comparative studies as and as baseline data for future references.

2. BACKGROUND OF 12TH BASE NATIONAL SCIENCE CAMP

In the 12th BASE National Science camp, there were one-hundred and sixty mixed-ability participants comprising eighty boys and eighty girls from Year 10 (aged 14 – 15) drawn from thirty-eight local secondary schools/colleges, and five technical/vocational colleges. There were a few students aged 20 selected from the latter. The camp curriculum was based on the theme of the 2003 science camp: that is, 'Youth for the Future Science and Environment'. The students or the camp participants were the target population of the survey conducted. The aim of the survey (refer Appendix 1) was to obtain their choice of 'Best Camper 2003'. Regrettably, there were two objectives of the survey which were not communicated to the camp participants and the survey was treated as a 'must-do' leisure activity, to fill in participants' extra time. Some of the camp participants thought that the survey was similar to exam questions as they expected grading from it: one wrote, "*What grade will you give me?*" The implicit (or hidden) objectives of the survey were to:

- 1) Gather participants' opinion as to whether the camp had successfully achieved its intended outcomes.
- 2) Investigate whether the camp had a positive impact on participants in terms of knowledge, skills and friendship.