

Political awareness among students

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Abstract: Political awareness refers to the political information and political knowledge that someone possessed. Political awareness might be differing from one individual to another. Students is one of the group of individuals that will become the leader of this country in the future. Some students when attaining the age of 21 years old, they are eligible to vote. Therefore, it is very important for them to understand current political system. That is why the Ministry of Education has obliged the Malaysian Studies course to be offered to all IPTS students, which one of the topics that they will learn is the Malaysian Government System. Therefore, it is important for the students to aware of the political matters of their surroundings.

Keywords: Political awareness, students, politics

1. Introduction

Malaysia practicing democracy system whereby every five years we need to vote our government. According to Weber, (1947) bureaucracy referring to any organization of modern society with several ideal characteristics such as unity of command, clear line of hierarchy, division of labor and specialization, record keeping, merit system for recruitment and promotion, and finally, rules and regulations to govern relationship and organizational performance. This was Weber's characterization as an ideal-type bureaucracy for policy development and implementation (Farazmand, A., 2009).

According to Junaidi (1993), students refers to the intellectual group that have vision, alert, sensitive to society and has been categorise as group that have high political consciousness. University or educational institution is not only the place where the students can get the knowledge that has been designated in their course plan, but they also need to be equipped themselves with variety of knowledge that may become handy to them in the future. One of that knowledge is the political knowledge. The students should realize the important of politics to them and the university or educational institution should give them space and opportunity to learn and participate in politics.

2. Political Awareness

Political awareness refers to:

“The ability to read into politicians' agendas by listening to how they are going to make the difference in running government policies. Also, knowing what has been not so good for the country and our Constitutional beliefs according to current laws and how they have been handled in the past.”

(Hermann, 1986).

Political awareness is very important to the citizen or public of a democratic country. This is because they need to know and understand how to react to any political matters happening in their country. However, the problem of inadequate civil awareness among the public including youth could be the reason of spoilt votes appear in the general elections (The Sun, 25 Oct 2017). Spoilt votes occur when the voters go for voting, but they make mistakes while completing a ballot which later makes the votes become invalid and cannot included in the vote count. Therefore, political awareness among the civil society is crucial in order to ensure they become a knowledgeable voter.

Political awareness among students is importance in order to ensure they understand the political agenda and the problem of the nations. This is because the students are considered as the potential human capital in the future. Therefore, they should aware that policy, law, rule and regulations of this country is set by the politician and must obey what decided by the government of the day. Which it shows that they cannot avoid from politics. This argument is supported by the study done by Izaz (1976) as stated in Ahmed, Javaid, Muzaffar, fatima, Hussain and Attock (2015), saying that the students should be aware of the basic political knowledge in order to bring a real democracy within the country. They also need to take active participation in the political system as a leader.

There were different terminologies that been used in defining the concepts of political awareness such as political sophistication, political information, political knowledge and political expertise. However, it is widely agreed that the political awareness is primary about acquiring the knowledge about politics. Therefore, according to Delli Carpini and Keeter (1996), political awareness refers to how much information voters have about politics. In general, political awareness means access to political information, political participation, media exposure, interest in politics and education. In addition, according to Zaller (1999) Political awareness can be defined as the extent to which a person pays attention to politics and to understand political information. This statement means the extent of political awareness that someone possessed is representing the political knowledge that they have. Political knowledge is the range of information about politics that is stored in long term memory or interpersonal discussion about politics. Political knowledge can be gained through formal education, interpersonal discussion about politics, printed media such as newspapers and new media such as facebook, youtube and twitter (Carpini and Keeter, 1996)

According to Mohd. Husaini, Adhwa Anuar, Adeel Ansari, and Muhammad Rauf (2011) other than universities, political awareness among the students also can be arouse by difference sources. One of it is the roles of the teachers, lecturers or educator. The teachers also played an important role in enhancing the student's attitude and personality. According to Honeyford (1982), he summaries that the teacher plays a crucial role in the student's life. The teacher is the one influencing the student's view of themselves and the sort of progress that they make. With the roles of the teachers it is hope can make the students wiser and have good attitude and personality.

3. Political awareness among the students

A study conducted by Star Education in measure the level of undergraduate's awareness about politics found that, the students lack enthusiasm about national and international politics. They even not interested in the in-campus elections. In campus election should be the starting point for the students to open their eyes and learn to be a responsible individual. According to the president of Persatuan Mahasiswa Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (PMUKM) sesi 2010/2011', Muzammil, he said that the campus election should be the place to teach and give students more experiences towards the chronology of real elections. At the same time can build their political awareness while give them chances to vote their leaders (Nadia,2012). So, this show by participate in the in-campus elections, the students can experience to be a voter and have an opportunity to cast a vote.

In addition, according to Profesor Syed Ahmad Hussein, the Deputy vice Chancellor of academic affairs, Universiti Sains Malaysia, the young Malaysian must raise their level of awareness and participation in three segments, which is politics, economics and society. He added that the young people should be aware of the issues happening surrounding them and they need to come out with possible solutions to that issues. The Star online also successfully received the undergraduates' opinion about political awareness. One undergraduate, Malini Ratnam says that the political awareness should be introduced to the undergraduate's students if they are ready. She clarifies that the maturity of the students might affect their level of political awareness. On the other Sabena Malini justifies that the students' knowledge about politics is very limited ad not their interest at the moments, this is because the main priority for the students is to get their certificate and finding the job (The Star Online, 2004). In addition, if talk about on campus elections, the students tend to choose the candidates based on their looks and appearances.

Back than in early 1970's Malaysia faced the phenomena of campus politics where the students involve in demonstrations. It follows with tremendous movement of the students whereby they start involves themselves with the political campaign, join street demonstration, became the members of political parties and the serious one is to oppose the government policy (Junaidi Awang, Mohd Fuad, Novel Lyndon and Sivapalan Selvadurai ,2015). The student's movement back then is very impressive. These phenomena are drastic action by the university students at the era of 70's. They are so aware of their right as a citizen in Malaysia and they are brave enough to shows their dissatisfaction towards political players. The result of this situation, the government have introduced Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti 1971 with the intention to control the students in campus movement. The situation of students in Malaysia is contrasts from another country. For an instance, Mhairi Black became the Britain's youngest Member of Parliament since 17th century. She is a fourth-year law school student and come from Scottish National Party. While in Australia, Wyatt Roy became the youngest person to be elected as the Asutralian Federal Parliament in 2010. Wyatt Roy at that time is at 20 years old But in Malaysia, the political parties are not allowed in the Universities. This shows there is a gap about maturity in democracies. This is because mature democracies show that the political career begin at the university (The Star Online, 2015).

Furthermore, the problem of lack of political awareness among students have been the problem in several countries. For an example, according to Karim Raslan (2014) in Indonesia, the research that has been done found that many of the Indonesians did not know the candidates of the upcoming presidency election and many of them also did not know the role of the members of house of representatives that been elected. This problem

also occurred in the develop country like United States, according to Carpini and Keeter (1996) in a survey that been conducted demonstrated that, young people in the United States are considerably less knowledgeable of and interested in political affairs. For example, they noted that the average college graduate today knows little more about public affairs than did the average high school graduate in the 1940s. This phenomenon has created a gap between nowadays graduates and the 1940's graduates. In addition, a study by Thomas Patterson (2002), shows that today's young adults are less politically interested. His study of citizen involvement in presidential elections concluded that the period between 1960 and 2000 marks the longest decline in turnout in the nation's history. Moreover, according to Ruy Teixeira (1992), he notes that although turnout has declined across all age groups since 1960, turnout decline has been the most rapid among voters under age 24, creating a widening age gap in participation.

4. Students limitation in politics

Basically, in Malaysia, the students are prohibited to join political parties and participate in the activities of any political party such as campaign, talk or protests. The students who participate in any political movement will get warning or fines from their universities especially those who support opposition. However, the amendment of Akta Universiti dan Kolej Universiti 1971 (AUKU) in 2012 has broaden the participation of the students in the politics. This amendment has authorized the students to take part in the political activities outside the campus. The amendment shows many of the students have participated actively in the political activities with their preferred party. In addition, AUKU amendments also allowed the opposition party to be invited and participate in any intellectual discourse in the public universities. However, the amendment give disappointments to several parties since there are certain clause that control the students. The Secretary of Students Solidarity Malaysia, Haziq Abdul Aziz mentioned that majority of students tend to not show interest in politics because they afraid of the action that the university will take against them.

According to Khaled Nordin (2008) in the Second Malaysia Students Leaders' Summit (MSLS) in 2008, the involvement of students in politics will restricts the student's development into holistic first-class human capital. He stressed out about the student's limitation in giving ideas and opinion about their political views. This according to him is wasteful to the students since their opinion is remain unheard. The similar view agreed by Weiss (2012) as according to him the students only play supporting roles in the effort of political change.

5. Conclusion

The students must aware that they are the future leader, and it is their responsibility to serve back the nation and give their best towards the country. By become a student that political conscience, it can stimulate their maturity to be the potential leaders in the future. Therefore, it is believed that when the students aware of the political matters they will became closer to the public and the reality of life instead of stuck in their own world.

6. Acknowledgements

The authors wish to thank UiTM Pahang for the encouragement to publish this paper and their invaluable support towards this study.

7. References

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