



**INSIGHT JOURNAL**

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN JOHOR

**International, Refereed, Open Access,  
Online Journal**

**Volume 3  
2019**

**eISSN : 2600-8564**

## **INSIGHT JOURNAL (IJ)**

UiTM Cawangan Johor Online Journal Vol. 3: 2019

**eISSN :2600-8564**

Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor  
insightjournal.my

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INSIGHT Journal is an international, open access, refereed, online, academic research journal established by Universiti Teknologi MARA Cawangan Johor, Malaysia. It is indexed in MyJurnal MCC.

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## **Empowering Learning Motivation and Experience Through Cross-Age Tutoring Community Service Project: Khind Education Hub to Community**

**Noriah Ismail<sup>1</sup>, Carolyn Soo Kum Yoke<sup>2</sup>, Haryati Ahmad<sup>3</sup>, Deepak Singh Ratan Singh<sup>4</sup>,  
Wan Nor Hafidzah Wan Mohd<sup>5</sup>, Norazam Arbin<sup>6</sup>, Suhaidi Elias<sup>7</sup>, Intan Safinas Mohd  
Ariff Albakri<sup>8</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Lecturer, Academy of Language Studies,  
UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Segamat, Malaysia  
*[noriah135@uitm.edu.my](mailto:noriah135@uitm.edu.my)*

<sup>2</sup> Lecturer, Academy of Language Studies,  
UiTM Cawangan Negeri Sembilan, Kampus Rembau, Malaysia  
*[sooku607@uitm.edu.my](mailto:sooku607@uitm.edu.my)*

<sup>3</sup>Lecturer, Academy of Language Studies,  
UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Segamat, Malaysia  
*[harya395@uitm.edu.my](mailto:harya395@uitm.edu.my)*

<sup>4</sup> Lecturer, Academy of Language Studies,  
UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Segamat, Malaysia  
*[deepa205@uitm.edu.my](mailto:deepa205@uitm.edu.my)*

<sup>5</sup> Lecturer, Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences,  
UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Segamat, Malaysia  
*[wanno995@uitm.edu.my](mailto:wanno995@uitm.edu.my)*

<sup>6</sup> Lecturer, Faculty of Computer and Mathematical Sciences,  
UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Segamat, Malaysia  
*[noraz574@uitm.edu.my](mailto:noraz574@uitm.edu.my)*

<sup>7</sup> Lecturer, Faculty of Business and Management,  
UiTM Cawangan Johor, Kampus Segamat, Malaysia  
*[suhaidi27@uitm.edu.my](mailto:suhaidi27@uitm.edu.my)*

<sup>8</sup> Lecturer, Faculty of Languages and Communication,  
Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris, Perak, Malaysia  
*[safinas@fbk.upsi.edu.my](mailto:safinas@fbk.upsi.edu.my)*

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the perception of ninety primary school students from Sekolah Kebangsaan Kampung Tengah, Segamat, Johor (SK Kampung Tengah) who were involved in a cross-age tutoring community service EDU HUB Project sponsored by KHIND STARFISH Foundation and organized by University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Johor, Malaysia. The project also involved 30 UiTM Cawangan Johor students who acted as the tutors, and six lecturers who were the advisors for the project. The project was carried out for eight weeks in which the Standard Four and Five students from SK Kampung Tengah were provided with special learning modules which focused on providing learning tips and motivation particularly in learning the English Language, Bahasa Melayu, Mathematics and Science. Two sets of questionnaires were deployed among the tutees prior to and after the project was conducted to analyse their perception of the project and the impact it has made on students' learning

confidence and experience. The findings revealed that the tutees enjoyed being involved in the project as it enhances their confidence, learning interest as well as motivation.

**Keywords:** Cross-age Tutoring, Learning Confidence, Learning Motivation, Community Service

## 1. Introduction

One of the main objectives of community service projects is to involve students in authentic activities that can develop their social behaviours including better communication skills, learning motivation, learning confidence and interest (Noriah Ismail et al., 2009; Noriah Ismail et al., 2011) as well as enhance their English speaking skills (Noriah Ismail et al., 2014). Astin and Sax (2001) who assessed the impact of community service on academic outcomes, which included language communication, social studies, social behaviour and motivation, found that community service participation provides positive effects on all the outcome measures. Although there are many studies and cited benefits of community service (Gillies, 2013; Giangreco, Broer, & Suter, 2011; Godsey, Schuster, Shearer Lingo, Collins, & Kleinert, 2008; Noriah Ismail et al., 2015), very few have been conducted on the impacts of cross-age tutoring as a community service project among suburban school students. Therefore, the current study would contribute to this particular field of knowledge. For their academic development, students are exposed with authentic learning experiences in which the academic content is taught in a real-life, real-world context. From the exposure, students will gain invaluable practical experience in their related fields which give them the opportunities to prepare, lead and reflect upon their service experiences. The key role of educators is to facilitate learning by creating opportunities for students to understand and analyse their service experiences in the context of their coursework. In addition, students develop their moral and civic values which in turn commit them to a lifelong interest towards voluntary work.

This study analyses the perception of ninety primary school students from SK Kampung Tengah, Segamat, Johor (SK Kampung Tengah) who were involved in a cross-age tutoring community service EDU HUB Project sponsored by KHIND STARFISH Foundation and organized by University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Johor, Malaysia. The study also looks at the impact the project has made on the students' learning confidence. Overall, extensive research in the area of community service related to cross-age tutoring is still few and far between, particularly in the suburban Malaysian context. Therefore, the study hopes to gain further insights into this particular area.

## 2. Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted on the impact of students' involvement in community service which reported that the students who participated in the programs benefited in several ways. For instance, a study by Eyler and Giles (2000) suggests that students involved in community service are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to increase their level of involvement in the community which helps to enhance their communication and learning skills. In addition, students who are actively involved in community service are able to be inquisitive and are able to enhance their critical thinking skills (Noriah Ismail, Suhaidi Elias@Alias & Intan Safinas Mohd Ariff Albakri, 2006; Noriah Ismail et al., 2007; Noriah Ismail & Suhaidi Elias, 2007a). Therefore, community service projects provide students with an opportunity to learn beyond the boundary of the traditional classrooms and give them ample chances to increase their learning skills (Noriah Ismail, Suhaidi Elias & Rafiaah Abu, 2007; Noriah Ismail, Normah Ismail & Intan Safinas Mohd Ariff Albakri, 2009; Noriah Ismail et. al; 2015).

In addition, in a study carried out by the Higher Education Research Institute USA, it was discovered that positive impacts of community service on learning include academic performance (GPA, writing skills, critical thinking skills), values (commitment to activism and

racial understanding), self-efficacy, leadership and interpersonal skills, choice of service career and plans to participate in service after college (Astin et al., 2000). Moreover, community service participation showed significant positive effects on academic outcomes, especially writing. These positive effects of service increase the likelihood of the students to further develop their interest in future service programmes. A team of researchers from Ohio University conducted a research on the learning outcomes of Service-Learning. 113 students enrolled in one of the five courses that were grounded with Service-Learning pedagogy. The five courses were interpersonal communication course in Conference Planning, a technical writing course in English, a human resource course in Business Management, a teacher education course, and hearing and speech course in Educational Psychology.

In order to explore students' affective and cognitive responses to these experiences, the research team designed a pre and post-test based on standard measures of attitudes towards the service and perceptions of specific and general learning outcomes. The students claimed to have been able to develop their analytic thinking which increased their ability to understand and ability to apply their knowledge to real problems. More significantly, they gained better awareness of societal problems around them as well as the need to participate in the community in order to contribute to it. In short, not only do they increase their analytical thinking which in turn enhances their academic skills but they also develop their potential to be more responsible members of the community (Musonda Kapatomoyo, 2005).

Students' participation in service learning can create positive learning experiences and can help them to comprehend their course content at the university level. A study by Mc Mahon (1998) used qualitative data for gaining insight into pre-service teachers' experiences and perceptions related to their involvement in community service. The subjects were undergraduate students enrolled in two sections of an early childhood course. Each student volunteered to work a minimum of 10 hours for an organization that served children. The students reflected their experiences by keeping dialogue journals and participating in two reflection sessions. At the end of the semester, students contemplated involvement in community service by responding to a set of open-ended questions in the form of a narrative reaction paper. Reaction papers were individually analysed by two researchers in order to identify the students': (1) overall attitude, (2) learning that occurred, and (3) impact on university life. The result of the study suggests that service in the community can be a valuable learning experience for pre-service teachers. The majority of the participants felt that despite the difficulties, the volunteer hours were valuable learning experience. Also, they reported increased knowledge in regard to themselves, the children they served as well as the community.

A study carried out by Noriah and Rafiaah (2006) analysed student facilitators' perceptions on the benefits of community service especially in regard to the students' communication apprehension. The subjects were asked to respond to a set of questionnaires (PRCA-24) developed by Mc.Croskey (1984) which assessed their communication apprehension level prior to and after their involvement in the community service project organized by their university. The subjects were also asked to respond to another set of questionnaires in order to analyse their perceptions of the project as a whole. The study found that the students view their involvement in community service as beneficial. In addition to a significant reduction in their ESL communication apprehension level, the students also found that their level of interest and motivation to serve the community has increased. Noriah et al. (2015) looked at how a group of 30 UiTM ESL tertiary level students' involvement in the university's community service project as ESL mentors and tutors for younger students has helped them to be more motivated to improve their own English speaking performance as well as their attitude towards community service volunteerism.

Noriah et al. (2006) conducted a study which assessed the impact of community service on tertiary students' ESL speaking performance. The study was in the form of pre and post-test research in which a group of student facilitators from UiTM Cawangan Johor were pre-tested on their speaking skills. The samples were evaluated based on Malaysian University English Test (MUET) speaking components. The subjects were then involved in the university's community service project on cross-age tutoring that required them to provide English lessons for some selected primary school students. After the project, the subjects were asked to sit for a post-test. The results revealed a significant improvement in terms of the student facilitators' task fulfilment, communicative ability as well as their overall speaking performance.

One of the reasons cross-age tutoring works may be that tutors and tutees speak a more similar language than do adult teachers and students. According to Hedin (1987), the tutees who are being taught by a peer or someone closer in age to them feel freer to express opinions, ask questions and risk untested solutions. The interaction between instructor and pupils is more balanced and livelier; this then stimulates the tutors to communicate well with the tutees. Therefore, involving university students in a community service project such as one which provides a cross-age tutoring service to some primary school students is a good move which can bring some positive outcomes not just to the tutees (the primary school students) but to the tutors (the university students) involved as well, especially in terms of their communication skills and learning motivation as well as interest (Noriah Ismail & Zaira Mohd Nor, 2006; Noriah Ismail et al., 2006; Noriah Ismail et al., 2015).

### **3. The Research**

The study analyses the impact of a cross-age tutoring community service project on the learning experience and confidence level of ninety primary school students from SK Kampung Tengah Segamat, Johor. The community service program was sponsored by KHIND STARFISH Foundation and organized by University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Johor.

The programme also involved thirty UiTM students who acted as the tutors and six lecturers who were the advisors for the project. The programme was carried out for eight consecutive weeks in which the Standard Four and Five students from SK Kampung Tengah were provided with four special learning modules which focused on providing learning tips and motivation particularly in learning English Language, Bahasa Melayu, Mathematics and Science.

The learning methods used in the modules include inquiry-based method learning and autonomous learning which stress on students' inquisitive, creative and autonomous learning. The programme was held for one and a half hours for each session which started at 2:00 to 3:30 P.M for two days in a week.

Two sets of questionnaires were deployed among the tutees prior to and after the project was conducted to analyse their perception of the project and the impact it has made on students' learning confidence and experience. The data were analysed quantitatively using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25. The findings revealed that the tutees found the program to be very beneficial to them. They claimed to enjoy being involved in the project as it enhances their learning confidence, interest as well as motivation.



## 4. Findings and Discussion

### 4.1 Impact on Learning

Analysis of the data revealed that the Cross-Age Tutoring Edu-Hub programme has positive impacts on the SK Kampung Tengah students. Based on the first set of the two questionnaires that were deployed on the pupils, in which sixty nine respondents were asked to determine the implication of the cross-age community service project towards their confidence in learning which motivates them to learn new skills, the McNemar pre-test and post-test analysis in Table 1 shows that there is a statistically significant difference in the proportion of confidence level for learning which enhances their motivation to learn, as evident in the result from the pre- and post-program,  $p = .024$ .

**Table 1: Confidence in Learning**

Test Statistics <sup>a</sup>	
	Before & After
N of Valid Cases	69
Exact Sig. (2-sided)	.024 <sup>b</sup>

a. McNemar Test

b. Binomial distribution used.

### 4.2 Positive Perceptions of the Programme

In addition, the students perceived the Cross-age Tutoring Community Service Project to be very beneficial for them, and they attended and joined the activities in the program voluntarily. The students claimed that the learning activities provided in the modules were enjoyable and they were able to learn new skills. In addition, the students also perceived that the innovative teaching method and techniques being used were helping them to understand the lessons, and overall they were interested and motivated to learn and would love to join similar programmes in the future.

**Table 2: Beneficial Learning Activities**

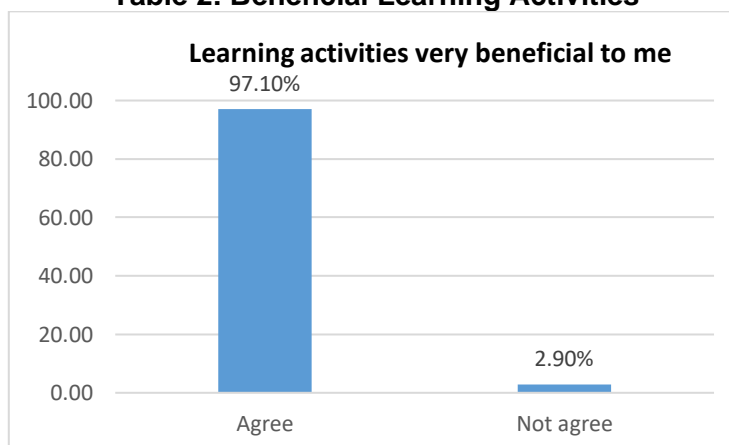


Table 2 illustrates a total of 97.10 percent of students agreed that the implementation of this programme benefits many students, especially in understanding concepts and methods. As an example, in the Science module, there were activities that required them to carry out experiments to build a building structure model and at the same time, they could learn about the concept and the requirements to build a strong and stable structure.

**Table 3: Program Attendance**

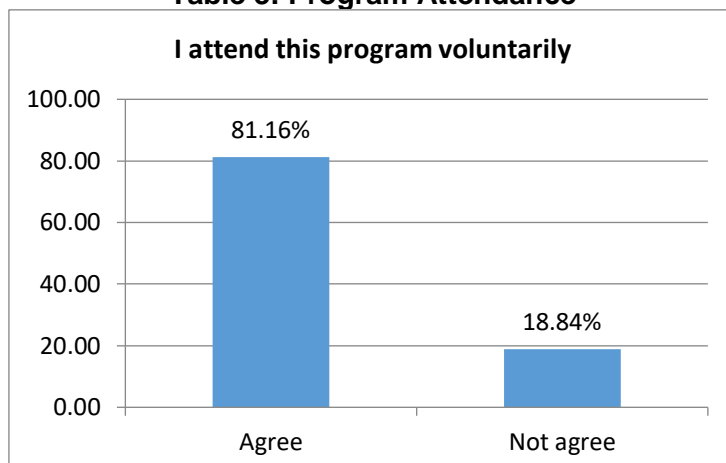
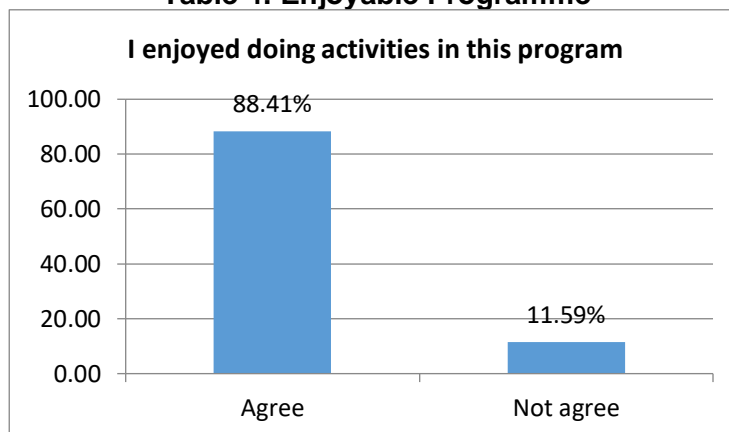


Table 3 shows that the majority of the students (81.16%) attended the program voluntarily. Despite the students' packed schedule (as the programme was held during school days and in between their other school activity - an Islamic religion programme at 4:00 P.M), they still enthusiastically volunteered to participate in it. This indicates that primary school students are interested in education-based programmes outside the classroom and are always looking for opportunities for one.

**Table 4: Enjoyable Programme**



As shown in Table 4, 84 percent of the participants also enjoyed the activities planned for them. This is because there were four interesting learning modules being used which were Bahasa Melayu, English, Science and Mathematics, that were developed specifically for the students who were in standard four and five, based on primary school curriculum. Among the activities used include vocabulary-based songs, picture paintings, mind mapping and so on. The aim of the learning modules was to enhance primary school students' learning interest, motivation and confidence.

**Table 5: Time Allocation**

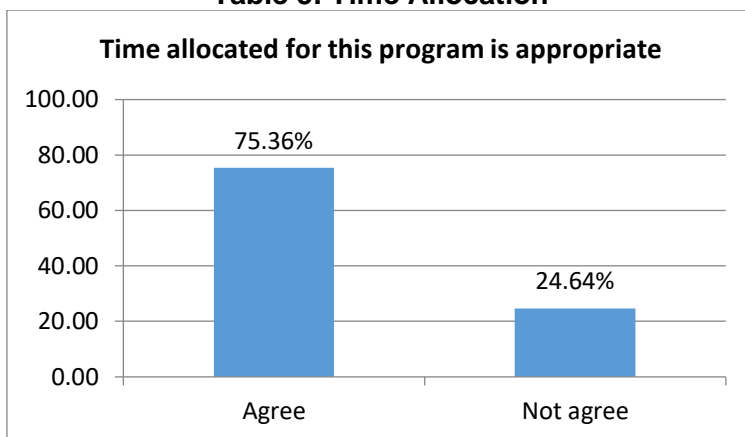
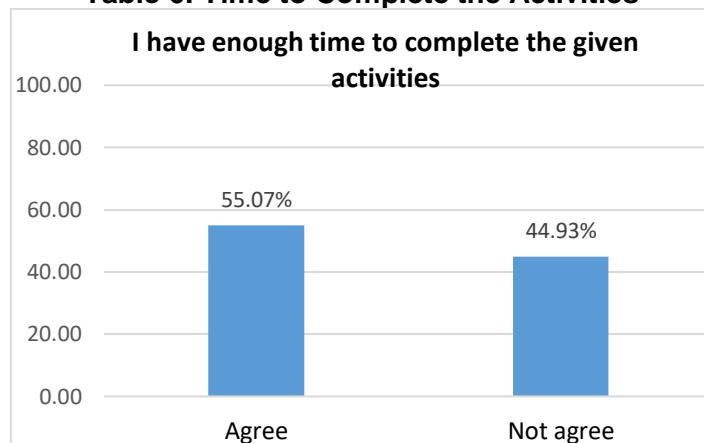


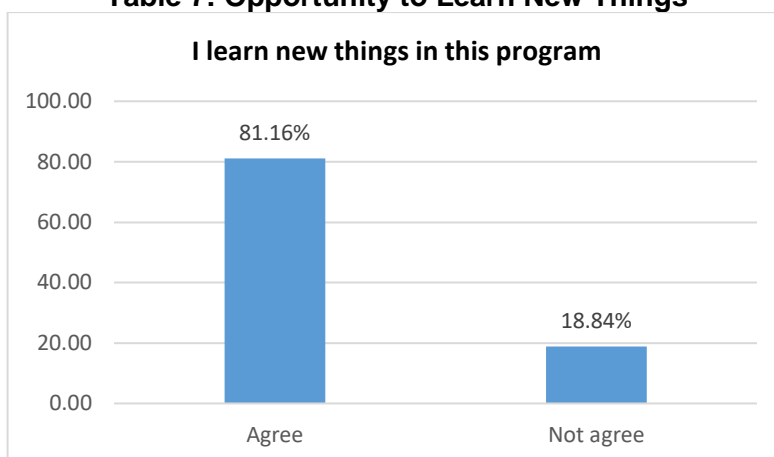
Table 5 illustrates that a total of 75.36 percent of students stated that the time spent on the programme was appropriate, i.e. from 2:00 P.M. until 3:30 P.M. This was because as the students needed to attend a religious programme at 3.30 P.M, the waiting time was filled with the beneficial learning activities from this EDU Hub Programme.

**Table 6: Time to Complete the Activities**



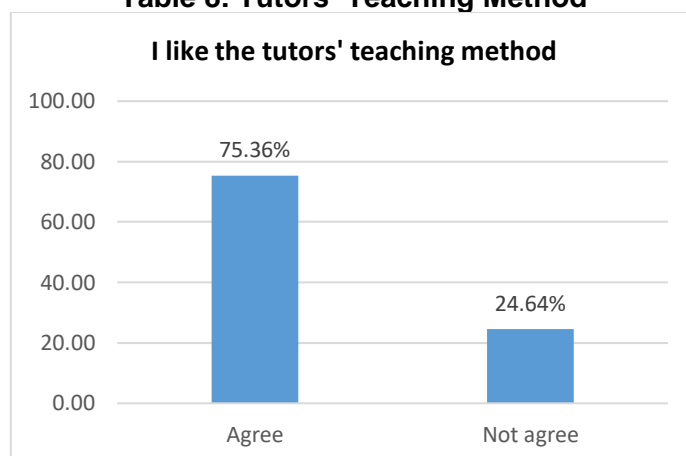
More than half of the students who attended the program stated that they had enough time to complete the activities given with a percentage of 55.07 percent as illustrated in Table 6. This shows that most of them were confident in completing all the learning activities as planned.

**Table 7: Opportunity to Learn New Things**



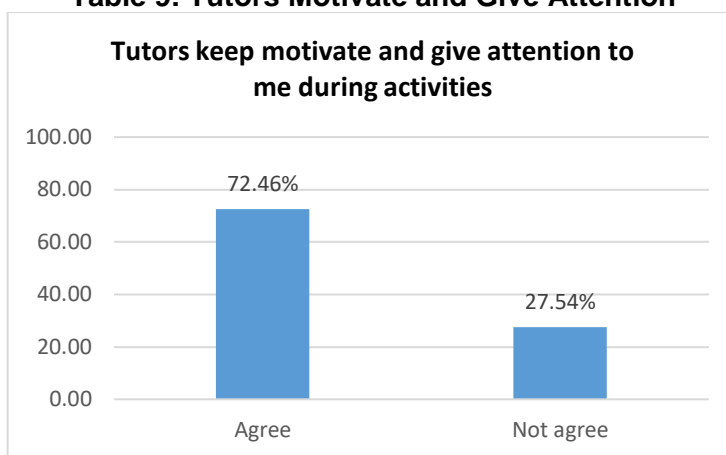
The development of modules used in this programme clearly provides a more interesting and different way of learning than how things are taught in the classroom. Table 7 indicates that a total of 81.16 percent of students said they learned new things through this programme. It was because even though the modules were based on the syllabus, they provided new learning techniques such as learning via inquiry techniques. It also shows that the implementation of activities in the program does not interfere with the syllabus and methods in the classroom, yet provides new opportunities for students to explore and experience different learning styles.

**Table 8: Tutors' Teaching Method**



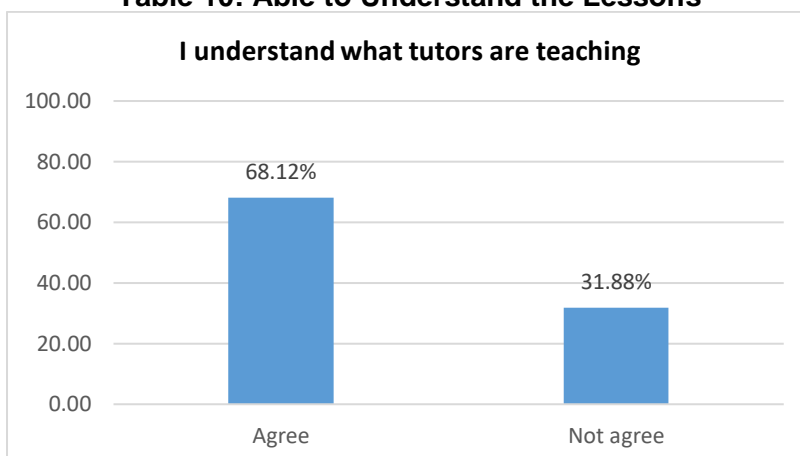
The teaching methods applied by the tutors also help to attract students to perform in all activities. As summarized in Table 8, a total of 75.36 percent of students liked the teaching method, where the tutors gave them clear instructions and guides, and encouraged the students to be inquisitive and creative such as allowing them to ask questions and encouraging them to show their creativity in learning through paintings, singing and other fun activities. The technique of learning through inquiry also taught them to be more independent and able to think creatively and critically especially in solving problems.

**Table 9: Tutors Motivate and Give Attention**



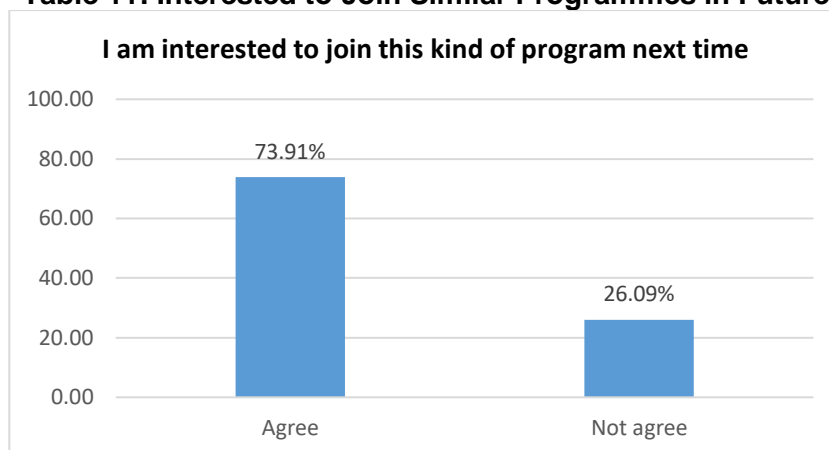
To be able to gain the students' attention during class, especially one in the afternoon, tutors are required to be truly involved and committed in their teaching. Therefore, as shown in Table 9, a total of 72.46 per cent of the students stated that the tutors always showed their enthusiasm and paid attention to the students during the activities. This has a positive effect on the students and contributed to their motivation and interest to learn as the tutors were always ready to assist them in learning.

**Table 10: Able to Understand the Lessons**



A total of 68.16 percent of students understood what the tutors had taught as indicated in Table 10. In this programme, the students were divided into four classes, and each class was taught by different tutors for each four subjects. From the survey, it is evident that the students were able to understand the lessons being taught by the tutors.

**Table 11: Interested to Join Similar Programmes in Future**



The implementation of such programmes was particularly interesting to the students where 73.91 percent of students said they would be interested to participate in similar programmes in the future if there is any opportunity. Hence, it is evident from this study that being involved in such a community service project does benefit primary school students as they not only enjoy the learning process but they are also able to improve themselves in many ways, particularly in their learning skills and confidence which make them feel good about themselves and become more motivated to be involved in future community service projects.

## 5. Conclusion

From the findings, the students perceived the Cross-age Tutoring Community Service Project to be very beneficial for them. One of the significant findings is that the programme helps the students to enhance their confidence in learning and increase their learning interest and motivation. These findings are similar to the studies carried out by Astin and Sax (2001) as well as Gillies (2013) on cross-age tutoring community service which indicates enhanced learning motivation and interest for the tutees. In addition, this study found that the students involved claimed the learning activities provided in the modules were enjoyable and they were able to learn new skills. These findings support earlier similar studies which found that cross-age tutoring as well as community service involvement benefits students as they provide students with an opportunity to learn beyond the bounds of the traditional classrooms and give them ample chance to increase their learning skills (Noriah Ismail, Suhaidi Elias & Rafiaah Abu, 2007; Noriah Ismail, Normah Ismail & Intan Safinas Mohd Ariff Albakri, 2009; Noriah Ismail et. al; 2015). Furthermore, in this study, the students also perceived that the innovative teaching method and techniques being used helped them to understand the lessons, and overall, they were interested and motivated to learn and would love to join similar programs in the future.

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**INSIGHT JOURNAL**  
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN JOHOR

**International, Refereed, Open Access,  
Online Journal**

**Volume 3  
2019**

**eISSN : 2600-8564**