

RUNNING THROUGH CULTURE

A Gamified Approach to Promoting Cultural Awareness through “Watt A Race”

Heriot – Watt Global College • Heriot-Watt University Malaysia

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Background & Rationale

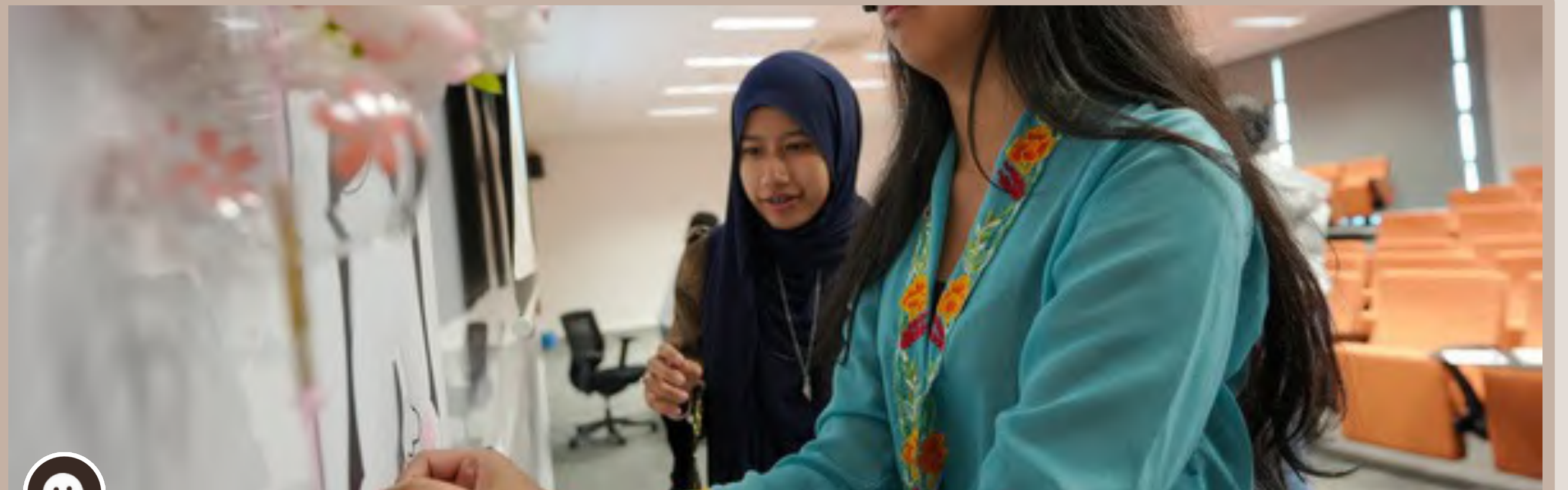
Diverse campuses – Students need real intercultural skills.
Traditional teaching methods often fall short:

- Passive
- Low student engagement
- Limited opportunity for real intercultural interaction

Watt A Race : a race – based game that turns cultural learning into hands – on experience
Grounded in: Kolb’s Experiential Learning Theory; gamification research in higher education (Deterding et.al).

Example Checkpoints

Three of the culturally themed stations participants raced through:



Sensory Etiquette Challenge
Blindfolded participants navigate a task by touch and verbal guidance only, building awareness of non-verbal cultural cues and trust-based communication.

Diverse students Active learning New approach

OBSERVED ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

Engagement, interaction, and learning outcomes were assessed through direct observation during the race.

Low Moderate High **Very High**

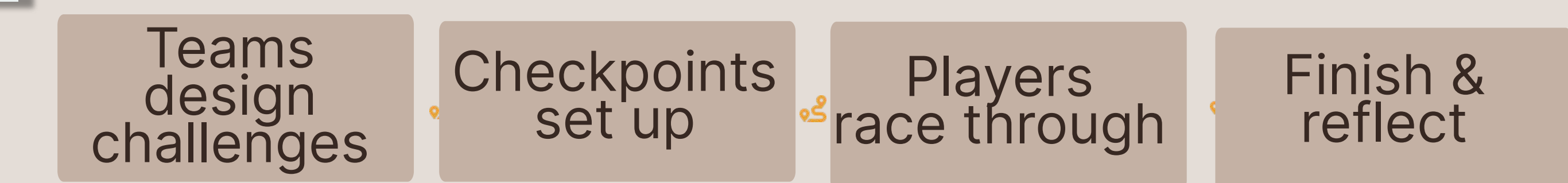
Evaluation & Findings

- ★ High, active, and enthusiastic engagement across teams
- ★ Clear evidence of collaboration and peer support
- ★ Rich, spontaneous cultural discussion at checkpoints
- ★ Increased interaction across diverse student groups
- ★ Positive informal feedback from participants

What is “Watt A Race”?

- A gamified, experiential learning activity that immerses students in culturally themed checkpoints — built and run entirely by students, for students.
- 🏁 Gamified race format with timed progression
 - 👥 Team-based challenges requiring cooperation
 - 📍 Culturally themed checkpoints along the route
 - 💡 Experiential learning — students do, not just hear

RACE FLOW



Flags & Greetings Scenario
Teams match national flags and greetings from across the world, sparking quick-fire discussion about customs, languages, and etiquette.

Key Contributions

- TAKEAWAYS**
- 🚩 A practical, low-resource model for teaching cultural awareness
 - 🚩 Scalable across disciplines and class sizes
 - 🚩 Supports student-centred, peer-led pedagogy
 - 🚩 Encourages experiential intercultural learning over passive instruction

Design & Implementation

- Student teams design original cultural challenges
- Teams are assigned roles — creators and players
- Checkpoint-based activity stations are set up
- Player teams race through, completing each checkpoint
- Facilitators observe engagement and reflection

📍 Low-resource setup: everyday classrooms, repurposed materials, and a simple checkpoint map — no special equipment required.



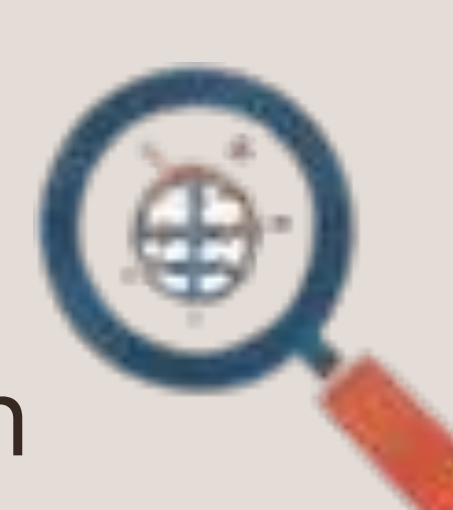
Traditional Craft Simulation
Teams in traditional dress recreate a coloured sand/pattern art form together, learning the symbolism and care behind a heritage practice.

Implications & Future Work

- 🔗 Add structured assessment tools (e.g., pre/post surveys)
- 🔗 Adapt checkpoints for online and hybrid settings
- 🔗 Integrate the activity into formal curriculum modules

Selected References

Kolb, D. A. (2014). Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.
Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011) From game design elements to gamefulness: Defining “gamification.”
Deardorff, D. K. (2006). Identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization.



LET'S GO
ADVENTURE