RESEARCH ARTICLE



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Letters

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**MEDIA LITERACY CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: ENHANCING LEARNING**

**VIA THE FILM CIRCLE PROJECT (FCP)**

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**Abstract**

Engaging students in voluntary and meaningful co-curriculum activities, using a minimal budget is a challenge faced by many educational institutions of higher learning. At the Centre of Foundation Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Dengkil Selangor, an innovation was introduced by initiating a campus wide, fortnightly Film Circle Project (FCP) that caters to the four thousand (4000) student population. The FCP is an innovative and economical approach of providing co-curriculum utilizing the concept of media literacy. This paper aims to present the conceptual framework of this year long project. Using films as the X – factor, FCP brought the world to Dengkil, exposed students to authentic and varied input of English outside the class, developed social and emotional learning and instilled social entrepreneurship and philanthropy. FCP also engages students positively, nurturing a sense of belonging to the campus. The FCP Media Literacy Project @ UiTM Dengkil can be replicated at any institution to fulfill the Malaysia Qualifications Agency (MQA) requirement that Foundation Studies must offer co-curriculum that renders social and civic values.

Keywords: media literacy, co-curriculum

**Conference track: Pedagogical Innovations in Education**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Shaping the country’s tomorrow means moulding the youth of today. As Malcolm X described it, “Education is the passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to those who prepare for it today”. The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) anchors the country’s aspiration to produce students of higher learning who are both holistic and balanced between knowledge, skills and ethics and morality. The two key areas encompass six primary attributes: ethics and spirituality, leadership skills, national identity, language proficiency, thinking skills, and knowledge. Initiatives to attain this aspiration are already in place inside-and-outside of classrooms in Malaysian universities, mostly focusing on co-curricular activities. Activities organized by clubs and societies for instance, play a significant role in nurturing student competencies in areas such as generic skills and social awareness

while helping students achieve higher GPAs (Hassan & Safar, 2010; Daniyal et.al 2012; Zehner, 2011).

According to Thomas & Day (2014), increasing attention is being given to the relationship between what is sought by employers and how universities provide relevant educational experiences. Increasingly in the global arena, generic skills is deemed to be a critical requirement for all graduates in maneuvering the challenges of the working world. Professions today demands flexibility, initiative and the ability to undertake many different tasks.

In addressing the issue concerned, the Soft Skills Development Module for Malaysian Higher Education Institutions 2006 has been introduced by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education to further catalyze the production of all-rounded and holistic graduate for the local and global job market.

Nevertheless, challenges abound. Ismail et.al (2010) in his work discovered that many students perceived co-curricular activities as unimportant when compared to academic-related activities. Ahmad Faisal, Amat & Mohd Ishak, (2010) augmented this view with data that most students are unaware of the positive effects from co-curricular involvement in the university. Other challenges namely inadequate budget, materials, guideline, club offices, sport and recreation centers, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms also hinder effective implementation of co-curricular activities (Regassa, 2014). Clearly, active and innovative approaches for co –curriculum is needed rather than outdated lectures and passive participation.

Using the concept of media literacy, we hope to transform co- curricula to something better suited to the pressing need of the 21st century. The heart of this project is to equip graduates with the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media. In any society, media literate youth and adults are better able to understand the complex messages we receive from the plethora of media forms .Our mission is to transform young people into critical media consumers who are literate and able to generate and implement new ideas.

**2. FILM CIRCLE PROJECT**

The Film Circle Project is an innovation introduced by the Asasi TESL Department, Centre of Foundation Studies (CFS) UiTM to motivate students’ involvement in meaningful and exciting co-curricular activities. Appreciating the nature of Gen-Z as described by Berk (2009), being “born with a chip”, the project used technology and media literacy theory to present the world to the students. By engaging students with a fortnightly array of film selections which are based on humanity, life-struggles and dramatic achievements, FCP screenings were packed to the brim with standing ovations from the audience as the film comes to the end.

Being a new campus, CFS lack the availability of students’ clubs and societies. Time constraint was also a major hurdle as the Foundation program is only 2-semesters long and students are normally too tired from their hectic schedules. Besides that, mobility is a resounding issue as the campus does not possess a bus, ergo limiting the opportunities for students to get involved in outside-campus activities and to charter commercial vehicles would be costly. Using film as its X-Factor, the project looked past all this limitations and aimed to;

1. Enhance students’ generic skills and social awareness by organizing non-academic activities that are entertaining and meaningful.
2. Bridging the gap between students of various disciplines by encouraging positive communication, interaction and understanding.
3. To spark critical and insightful discussions on societal and global issues.

Entrance was via a minimum donation of RM3.00 that were channeled towards certain communities in need. Philanthropism and social awareness are instilled within the students as they began to understand that everyone, even a student, can play a part in making the world a better place. Brief videos and clips on the effects of war in Syria were aired to propagate awareness of the calamity and hardship of those living on the other side of the globe. For the 2015/16 session, all proceeds totaling RM 7271.00 from the screening were donated to the Syria Care Foundation.

The Film Circle Project operates on a two-pronged framework, which is to ‘bring the world to campus’ and to encourage the desire to reach out and make a difference. Besides developing students’ leadership and social-awareness qualities, students also benefit by improving their language and communication skills via the exposure to authentic English usage to films. As mentioned by (Russel & Waters, 2013) the method of teaching using film is valuable and very applicable in today’s media-driven society. The use of film as an educational tool has been heavily researched over the past decade; results vary, depending on how the teacher uses the film. For the students, media literacy helps them make sense of the language and the world. With repetition and reinforcement over time, students are able to internalize a checklist of skills for effectively negotiating the global media culture in which they will live all of their lives. Improved societal awareness, leadership, language competence and critical thinkers are all essential skills required of a 21st century graduate.

1. **BENEFITS OF THE FILM CIRCLE PROJECT**
2. **Helps to meet curriculum requirements while at the same time uses fresh contemporary media content which appeals to students.**
3. **Focuses on process skills rather than content knowledge, which helps the students gain** the ability to analyze any message in any media and thus are empowered for living all their lives in a media-saturated culture.
4. Instills humanitarian and volunteerism by involving students in philanthropic activities
5. Creating a replicable model for implementation, The FCP Media Literacy Project @ UiTM Dengkil can be a sustainable platform for media literacy.
6. **CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF The FCP Media Literacy** **Project @ UiTM Dengkil**

The careful selection of the films is critical for the success of this project. The films were selected based on several factors: pedagogical implications, outstanding moral values and finally content and appeal to the target audience. For this project, six films, each bringing different experience, learning outcomes and values were selected and screened for student participants. ‘Freedom Writers’ is a true story of an idealistic teacher teaching a group of high risk students. This film pays tribute to an inspiring teacher as well as highlights the beauty of unity that transpires from diversity.

‘Gridiron Gang’ and ‘Ola Bola’ were selected for its solid never-give up attitude, teamwork and unity through sports. ‘Invictus’, on the other hand introduced students to the great leader Nelson Mandela and the anti-apartheid movement. In these confusing and challenging times, the young needed such role models and a clear philosophy of life. ‘The King’s Speech’ and Hamka’s *Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck* focused on the beauty of language and literature, besides social status and love. These movies inculcated the critical values that cannot be taught in normal classroom settings. It produced a result beyond the four walls of classrooms, and led the students to engage with society via involvement in humanitarian projects.

The FCP successfully spurred and promoted the element of social entrepreneurship, a unique approach towards funds generation among students. Geared towards aiding the unfortunates, the project with its’ almost 0% financial capital was able to collect a sum of money which was then channeled to a notable refugee-aiding NGO; Syria Care Foundation for the Syrian refugees.

Lastly the project increased students’ exposure to English outside of class, to multiple accents of English in various circumstances. The different films with its complex plots, dilemma and social issues developed students’ emotional intelligence and critical thinking. Such qualities include the ability to empathize, to communicate and respond positively in new situations. Obviously individuals with better soft skill make better leaders and mentors, and are more equipped in surviving the uncertain future.

1. **CONCLUSION**

This article has documented the theoretical framework of the media literacy model of the Film Circle Project. It has demonstrated an innovative approach to co-curriculum that is entertaining yet impactful. Also Co curriculum activities can be organized on a minimal budget yet it caters to an extensive population. A valuable outcome with regard to the education policy emerging from the project is that Universities and the Ministry of Education should consider the benefits of film literacy, as a value added extra-curriculum. Media literacy projects such as FCP engages students positively and changes their perception of films and entertainment. Finally FCP provides students with a common approach to critical thinking that, when internalized can become second nature and is a valuable preparation for global citizens.

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**Appendix** : **Conceptual Framework of the FCP Media Literacy Project**

1. Freedom Writers
2. Gridiron Gang
3. Tenggelamnya Kapal Van der Wijck
4. Invictus
5. Ola Bola
6. The King’s Speech
7. Enhancing students’ general knowledge and social awareness
8. Improving students’ language skills and proficiency
9. Increasing students’ level of interest towards co-curricular activities via diversified model of delivery
10. Exposing students to contemporary literary works and different cultures of the world.
11. Heightening students’ soft skills
12. Social Entrepreneurship
13. Philanthropism
14. Humanitarianism

Film Titles

Learning Enhancements

Noble Outcomes