

CREATING A PUBLIC SCULPTURE TO ENHANCE THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN VISUAL ARTS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT: *This research aims to study the progress in public sculpture in Malaysia schools by providing some experiential learning to students. Through such learning activity, students get visual experiences while producing an artwork. The qualitative method used in this study include the interview process, observation, and document analysis. A test was conducted and examined to obtain data which will be described. Results obtained demonstrated that experiential learning method is effective in providing the platform for students to express interests, demonstrate knowledge, express understanding on matters, and display appreciation of artworks. Not only that, students find learning more meaningful when they are exposed to real situations such as an art production process while fabricating an artwork that would benefit the whole school community.*

Keywords: public sculpture, teaching, and learning, experiential learning, visual arts education

1. INTRODUCTION

Public art provides multifarious purposes for an individual, group, or community to express their thoughts and ideals in ceaselessly diverse visual forms. McCarthy, J. [1] also mention that public art can indeed integrate the objectives of place promotion and reflecting local identity, although they show that the balance between each is a function of different priorities and circumstances. Each creation of public art would vary in purposes and meanings, providing personalized space to be shared and interpreted in a more impersonalized exhibit. Several types of research have highlighted that public art such as the production of sculpture in public spaces could be seen as a medium which creates and develops a sense of unity with shared values within a community [2]. The process of producing a public art such as the development of a sculpture in schools as a community project can serve a wide range of experiences such as collegiality among those involved in the process, multicultural exposures, and multicultural tolerance which subsequently becomes a platform for experiential learning. Therefore, experiential learning through the production of public art in a school setting may enhance and scaffold learning with the possibilities of developing interpersonal communication skills, improving multicultural tolerance when producing an art piece. This is because a sculpture may have various cultural elements influenced by personal experiences and values of those who are involved in the whole production process. Therefore, this study aims to look at some outcomes from the process of creating a public sculpture within a school environment while providing a platform for experiential learning.

2. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The Malaysia Government Transformation Programme (GTP 1.0) has put education as one of the National Key Result Areas (NKRA) that needs to be given continuous perspicacity and focus. Much discussions have been conducted by various quarters about providing students with not only the required knowledge and skills but also the necessary real-life experiences through learning including the Visual Art Education. [8]. Students need to be able to have a learning environment and experiences which allow for 'growth-producing experiences' not only in a subject matter but should include that of their own life encounters [3]. Using simulations is another teaching method which provides a

platform to experiential learning for students to take charge of their own learning using their knowledge and skills while the teachers act as a facilitator. Through student-led activities, Naidu [4] identified that students not only enjoyed the activities but importantly observed that students were also empowered to use their knowledge and skills in handling and materializing their own resolutions. A noteworthy observation made by Kolb [3] that should be given significant attention is how experiential learning endowed students with the sense of belong within a community specifically among their compatriots and the school community. Not only that, but experiential learning also improves students' confidence level where students feel respected and their experiences are recognized in discussions and decisions making. Therefore, this study will into how the development of public art provides a foundation of experiential learning in the school environment through the process of making a public sculpture within the school setting.

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The Malaysia Ministry of Education has introduced and implemented the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013 as a paradigm shift towards better quality in education. With efforts in educational transformation, vigorous measures have been executed to elevate academic performance among students in Malaysian schools. With changing trends and demands in not only the local shores, but the exigency and vicissitudes in global affairs have also called every quarter who are concerned with the educational backdrop to pull together in realizing the objectives of the 2013 Education Blueprint [5]. Providing students with the knowledge and skills are not the only major concerns now in schools but it is also necessary to scaffold students with necessary experiences as best as possible to that of their real-life settings in preparing them for the society or commonly described as 'the real world'. Experiential learning is a method which has been much talked about but opportunities for activities that simulate real-life experiences require meticulous plans and preparations to achieve the intended objectives and success. Nevertheless, the fastidious preparations should not deter teachers from employing the experiential teaching methodology with their students. Bell, D. stated that art can be an absorbing, internalized, and a-social experience [6]. The Visual Arts Education in

Malaysian secondary schools can employ various student-led activities which not only can develop interests in the subject but also increase students' awareness in other aspects such as tolerance, culture, and history. Public art such as creating public sculptures in the school compound led by students can be accounted as a valuable experience for learning through the Visual Arts Education content.

B. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aims to identify whether secondary school students in the Malaysian setting are able to comprehend the task given to them and to evaluate their performance and appreciation on the process of an art installation through the conceptualization of a public sculpture within the school compound. Based on the problems presented, the researchers listed several research objectives including; (1) To determine whether developing public sculpture helps students to understand the making of public sculpture through experiential learning, (2) To determine whether developing public sculpture can attract student's interest in the learning process, and (3) To gauge the ability of visual art appreciation among students through the making of public sculpture.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study used purposive sampling in which a species of twenty-three secondary school students were identified and selected for the student-led public sculpture installation in a Malaysian secondary school. These students are the only group of students in a school from a Malaysia district who are taking the *Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia* or Malaysia Education Certificate examination at the end of each compulsory national secondary school level. Data for this study were collected through the questionnaire distributed to the students and their responses were graded as suggested in the national curriculum content. The evaluation aspects identified and used in the form to evaluate students' knowledge and appreciation on public sculpture used in this study are based from the form provided in the national curriculum content as endorsed by the Curriculum Development Centre Education Malaysia (2007). The six aspects include; students' knowledge on design basics, demonstration of understanding in using and manipulating tools and materials, students' display in art-making process and technique used, students' ability to interpret task and theme given through an art product, ability to express meanings and values in their art installation, and the sixth aspect is to evaluate the functionality of the students' art installation.

4. DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Fig. 1. The beginning designing stage of the public sculpture



Figure 1: The basic structure of the sculpture

Fig. 2. The process of public sculpture was completed in three months.



Figure 2: The public sculpture has been completed

Fig. 3. The appreciation session conducted after students produce a public sculpture at the site.



Figure 3: The respondent’s appreciation learning process

5. FINDINGS

The participating students for this study completed the questionnaire distributed to them and were analyzed. Following Figure 1, the analysis on the six aspects which were listed in the questionnaire regarding the process of public sculpture as suggested in the curriculum content for Visual Arts Education at the upper secondary level in Malaysian schools.

Fig. 4. Students' knowledge and appreciation of public sculpture

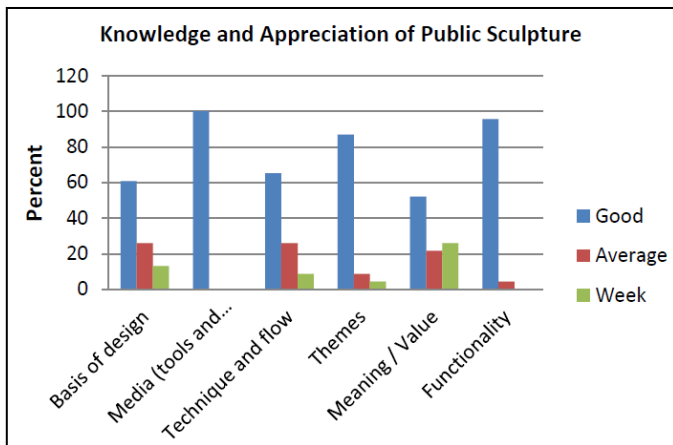


Figure 4: The researchers have identified six main item level of knowledge of students in the appreciation of public sculpture

A. Knowledge of Basic Elements of Design

It has been identified that 60.87% of the students were able to provide their responses when asked on most of the basic elements in art and design. These elements include lines, texture, shape, colour, form, value and space; the means an artist uses to organize elements within a work of art.

However, about 26.09% of the participating students could only provide some of the elements needed and required for the design. It needs to be highlighted though that 13.04% poorly provided their responses in the questionnaire with most of them could not even identify the highly important elements in basic design which include the basic elements and principles of art. Such condition may be due to students involved are poor students. From initial observations, the researchers found that they were less concerned with the traditional learning such as learning in the classroom to teacher-centered.

B. Understanding in the Use of Media (Tools and Materials)

Results from the analysis revealed that all of the students were able to identify the media used in fabricating the public sculpture on the school ground. As this is the first experience of these students produces public sculpture, researchers have proposed material in accordance with the student's ability to generate public sculpture. Importantly, they were able to provide some description on the use of the tools and raw materials such as plywood boards, steel, cement, , and sand. Overall equipment used in the production of this public sculpture is like a jigsaw, a hammer, welding tool, drill, and electric screwdriver. This implies that they understand what they are doing in the process of production of this public sculpture.

C. Knowledge about Technique and Flow

Analysis of students' demonstration of knowledge in the skills of the process and technique in creating a public sculpture revealed that 62.22% performed successfully with about 26.08% show a satisfactory performance. However, it needs to be put forth that 8.7% of them are still unable to show a satisfactory performance of skills within these much necessary aspects for art production.

However, there are still a number of study participants who were in moderate and weak. According to the observations, their weakness is due to the learning styles of their previous situations it is teacher-centered learning style or spoon feeding.

D. Knowledge about Themes

The respondents are then further queried in their understanding of given themes for the production of an art piece. This can be observed not only in their written responses but also as demonstrated in their work of art. It was obtained that 86.96% of the respondents were able to exhibit their understanding of the theme given to them with 8.7% only demonstrated a satisfactory performance. Sadly, 4.34% were unable to provide the accurate requirement of theme provided. This situation clearly shows that most students are able to find the perfect theme associated with the work of public sculpture they produce.

E. Knowledge about Meanings and Values

After analyzing students' responses which gauge their ability to interpret the meanings of their art installation, it was identified that 52.17% of the students were able to express meanings to their work the best. This may be due to their existing knowledge in the study of visual arts education. This was followed by 21.74% respondents who were able to provide some kind of explanation to their work. Regardless, it is worthy to report those who provided equivocal is higher at 26.09% compared to the prior analysis. The researcher

believes this weakness stems from a lack of exercise in appreciation session between fellow students or with teachers in the subjects of visual art education. This may be due to the time constraints of the solid to the appreciation of the teaching and learning process in the subject of visual arts education. Students who were almost unable to express their thoughts have poor judgments of the task given to them especially with regard to the production of a public art which may be due to some explainable reasons such as lack of exposure and hands-on experiences even at school level.

F. Understanding about Functionality

Functionality in art defined as conveying a visual, tactile or other sensorial appeals through its materiality, form, colour, and composition to the creator and or its audience. It is also known as art appreciation. According to Mohd Johari Abdul Hamid [6], art appreciation is like watching activities, appreciate, or appreciation of art is also one of the areas of art criticism. In this study, a public sculpture created by students is simply an aesthetic nature. The study showed that the highest frequency at which the respondents of 95.65% or 22 respondents gave the correct answer while only one student or 4.35% which states that the answer is irrelevant.

This study also identifies the level of students' knowledge related to aspects of the meaning and function of public sculpture they produce. The analysis results show that the income of public sculpture in the field able to make them understand clearly the meaning and function in the artwork they produce.

6. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings show that creating a public sculpture through experiential learning in Visual Arts Education is highly effective and can increase understanding, interests, and level of knowledge of students in the appreciation of the visual arts. It is recommended that teachers be encouraged to implement this method of learning in which teachers can encourage learning activities outside the classroom-based projects. This proposal is in line with a proposal introduced by the Ministry of Education (MOE) in 2006 to encourage innovation in teaching and learning process.

a. Teaching approaches Visual Arts Education teacher

In this way, teachers will be more active and creative in implementing teaching and learning. This is because based on previous studies have shown that learning has traditionally as a teacher-centered is very weak and is not feasible in the present study.

b. Experiential Learning to Students

The results of the implementation of public sculpture through experiential learning in Visual Arts Education found that students showed a high interest in the learning process which involves the production of public sculpture. Therefore, proper experiential learning is fully implemented by teachers to students more interested in learning and produce artwork that can give meaning to them.

c. The Ministry of Education Malaysia

The findings also show that in The Ministry of Education Malaysia, the ministry needs to take certain steps in

developing this active learning. For example, they can provide exposure, knowledge, and preparation to the teachers about the importance of experiential learning in the form of in-service training (LADAP) for the purpose of empowering teachers to carry out this study. In addition, teachers should be prepared to make the transformation in teaching and learning. Teacher-centered learning should be replaced with student-centered learning.

7. CONCLUSION

The main objective of the researchers in conducting this study was to develop a public sculpture through experiential learning in Visual Art Education in secondary schools. This study used a qualitative approach with the application of action research that focuses on the processes in the production of public sculpture through experiential learning in Visual Art Education in secondary schools. Results of this study were to answer the research questions that are phrased as contained in public sculpture through experiential learning in Visual Arts Education is very excited to produce this public sculpture. Based on the analysis part 1 indicates that experiential learning has a positive impact on student achievement, especially in terms of understanding in carrying out the assignment. It reflects the real impact of this learning approach. Based on the analysis of the interviews shows that experiential learning approach is also able to attract students, adding new knowledge and improve the skills of students in terms of their tolerance. This situation explains that the levels of acceptance among the students are positive. This occurs due to the method of experiential learning is an interesting approach to learning. Respondents indicated their happiness and their willingness to follow the instructions in completing the task, even during the holiday. The advantages of experiential learning have also succeeded in making a student who knows how to appreciate and evaluate the artwork. This situation can be seen through the appreciation session conducted after the completion of public sculpture. Ability and level of students indicate that they can evaluate and appreciate the artwork as well.

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