

## Performing the Living Heritages of a Semi-Urban Town in Malaysia: A/r/tography on the Heutagogy Approach

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### ABSTRACT

Future work skills required in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) are creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration (4C's). This article explores responses to the heutagogy approach, focusing on two aspects: a) self-determination, and b) knowledge-sharing through technology. These aspects were explored through a project aimed at developing an appreciation for the living heritages of a semi-urban town in Malaysia through the performing arts. The participants were twenty voluntary public secondary school students who had no formal training in this area. The research used a/r/tography, an arts and education practiced-based methodology that emphasized continuous inquiries on the planning, action, reflection and revision processes. Findings showed that performing arts productions which require 4C's are underdeveloped among participants. It also showed that access to personal mobile technology is limited by the school's regulation and parents' financial status. The findings raise concerns on the implementation status of 4C's in the national education system.

**Keywords:** heutagogy, Internet, living cultural heritages, performing arts, self-determination.

### Introduction

The future work skills required in the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) are critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration (4C's). Student-Centred Learning (SCL) to teaching and learning is highly recommended in developing these skills. The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) which engages new technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), digitization, automation and Internet of Things (IOT) are reshaping the ways in which humans work and relate to each other today. These breakthroughs require a redesign of the education system in a number of ways such as enhancing, reskilling and upscaling talents that coalesce humanistic values with intelligent machines (Maria, Shahbodin, & Naim, 2018). New media literacy, virtual collaborations, cognitive load

management, social intelligence, computational thinking, cross cultural competency, transdisciplinary, design mindset, novel and adaptive thinking and sense making skills will be required in the 4IR (Diwan, 2017; Gray, 2016). The importance of problem solving, ICT operations and concepts, communication, collaboration and information literacy to twenty-first century working skills needs to be emphasized in education (Teck Choon & Low, 2018).

Generation Z (aged between 13–19), digital natives born into the age of the Internet, possess acumen and astute skills in technology (Diwan, 2017). They are skilled at multi-tasking and sourcing information from the Internet with velocity. Generation Z learn quickly through virtual interaction online, therefore decreasing the dependency on face-to-face interaction. They are quick to understand

visual illustrations and short informative messages. They are exposed to learning from multiple disciplines using a variety of approaches. However, Generation Z have reduced attention spans for lengthy, detailed information, and are exposed to information overload that are sometimes unverified and inaccurate. They are also surrounded by multiple distractions thanks to global accessibility on their mobile devices.

Since the early 21st century, the Internet has provided the world with ubiquitous access to knowledge. Knowledge and data are currently being distributed at an incredible speed, enabling teaching and learning to be tailored to individual needs, capabilities and abilities. Educators are able to assess and monitor each student's progress and modify learning to the individual's capacity. They can be contacted via online discussions and serve as advisors from afar. The student's role is to access the right data to provide solutions rather than be given instructions on problem solving. Robots will be programmed to advise learners on managing their assigned homework.

Although information is readily accessible today, Generation Z may not necessarily be able to fully comprehend or interpret the vast knowledge available online. Unlike their parents whose education were both theoretical and experiential, many Generation Z students gather information through second hand knowledge obtained from the Internet. Therefore, the educator plays an important role in guiding Generation Z to evaluate, review and decipher the vast information disseminated through the Internet. The role of the educator today would be to facilitate, advice and inspire learning. They guide the student on how learning may take place, engender critical approaches to evaluating information and negotiate the assessment processes (Hase & Kenyon, 2000, p. 7).

### Statement of Problem

In Malaysia, formal education pioneered by the British in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century emphasized pedagogical and instructional approaches to teaching and learning. Due to limited access to knowledge, students learned from school teachers who conveyed knowledge provided from textbooks. Student competency was assessed based on how well they reiterated the textbook. Critical thinking, self-exploration and experiential learning were not the focus of education during these pioneering years of implementation (Ackoff & Greenberg, 2016).

Despite the Ministry of Education's urge for teachers to explore new teaching approaches relevant to the work

skills required for the future, the pace toward this drive remains slow. Saleh and Aziz (2017) found that the teaching practices employed by Malaysian teachers were still very much bound to conventional teaching methods, in addition to still being teacher-centred (p. 63). Garba et al. (2015) discovered that despite the ICT and Internet resources provided for twenty-first century approaches in classroom pedagogy and technological competence of teachers, the approach to teaching and learning in the Malaysian context has not changed much (p. 72). Garba et al. (2015) posits that teachers need to adopt twenty-first century teaching approaches as they are key players in creating a twenty-first century learning environment (p. 77). Among the new teaching approaches suggested include outcome-based education (OBE), challenged-based education (CBE), gamification, flipped classroom and performance-based learning.

Lim et al. (2019) states that lecturers from selected private higher institutions acknowledged that student centred approach encourages independent learning, evokes a sense of responsibility, develops technical and soft skills, and facilitates bonding through student networks. However, lecturers still preferred the teacher-instructional approach especially in managing large classrooms (p. 505). Tee et al. (2018) found that most classroom practices in Malaysian secondary schools were similar and lacked activities related to creative engagement and thinking (pp. 17–33). Another study showed that computer assisted learning/E-learning is the popular choice for Student Centred Learning (SCL) approaches compared to others such as PBL, collaborative learning, case-based learning, and inquiry-based learning. The study recommended seven dimensions of SCL—Learners' Engagement (LEG); Learners' Empowerment (LEP); Collaboration (COL); Teachers' Role (TRO); Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS); Methods/Approaches (APR); and finally, Assessment (AST) when designing the SCL curriculum (Mohd Yusof, Abdul Karim, Othman, Mohin, & Abdull Rahman, 2016). According to Mustafa (2018):

Experiential learning, future-ready curriculum, and life-long learning mindset are critical elements in uplifting graduates' skills and attributes to thrive in the gig economy world ... We need to equip our graduates with future-proof skill sets by harnessing their humanistic, technological and data analytics competencies in embracing 4IR which is radically changing the landscapes of higher learning institutions all over the world and Malaysia is no exception. (Mustafa, 2018; Zakaria, 2017)

The current discussions on education reveal an emerging trend toward SCL. Educators will need to adapt their

teaching approaches to prepare Generation Z for global changes in technology occurring in the early twenty first century (Fisk, 2017; Zakaria, 2017). Therefore, it is incumbent for current educators to re-evaluate their teaching practices to prepare this generation for the future.

## Literature Review

In addressing the need to develop SCL, our research team chose to explore the heutagogy approach because it could be integrated in tandem with the pedagogical approach used in training the participants who had no formal training in music, movement and acting (referred to as performing arts thereafter).

## Heutagogy in Theory

Heutagogy is “self-determined” learning in which the focus is not on “what is to be taught” but “what a learner wants to learn” and “how they want to learn it” (Blaschke, 2012). Heutagogy moves the pedagogy processes from a teacher-learner to a learner-centred approach. The heutagogy approach is successful when learners have a strong interest and desire to learn about something that is important to them (Hase & Kenyon, 2000, p. 9). This stimulus drives them to continually search for information on a particular topic. Heutagogy is based on a humanistic and constructivist philosophy whereby the ability to determine one’s own educational process is deemed a humanistic value (Hase & Kenyon, 2000, p. 21). Heutagogy has similarities with the constructivist approach, where the learner is at the heart of the educational experience (Freire, 1977; Piaget, 1973; Vygotsky, 1978). Experiential learning provides the learner with the freedom to create his or her own learning experience using constructivist approaches. Although heutagogy was first developed for graduate students, its popularity has since spread into primary and secondary education.

However, the heutagogy approach is not the primary mode of learning in every situation. It does not replace the didactic, pedagogical forms of teaching that are required to teach skill-based subjects and specific knowledge before embarking on new explorations of these areas (Hase & Kenyon, 2015). Heutagogy offers a different dimension of learning that sparks neurons and opens pathways to new knowledge as the learner seeks answers and unravels knowledge that lead to even more questions. This approach traverses the boundaries of pedagogical and andragogical systems that form boundaries

of knowledge which are mainly determined and directed by the teacher (Hase & Kenyon, 2000, p. 11). Although heutagogy is not a new concept, its potential for success is much higher today due to emerging technologies that enable information to be accessed and shared instantaneously. The heutagogy approach is more realistic today than before due to advancements in technology over the last few years.

## Heutagogy in the Performing Arts of Malaysia

Various projects exploring the local arts, culture and heritage have been conducted in Penang and Kuala Lumpur by Arts-Ed, a non-governmental organization led by Janet Pillai. These projects enhanced community-based arts and cultural education in these two cities. These projects focused on SCL with the aim of shaping the personal development of children through performing activities created by the participants themselves. This approach resembles the heutagogy approach (L.C. Toh, personal communication, May 10, 2021). Stage and street productions that highlighted local heritages such as *Ronggeng Merdeka* (2007), *Opera Pasar* (2008), *Heritage Heboh* (2003) and the Penang Heritage Idol Project (2004). According to Tan (2008), these projects empowered young Malaysians to revitalize traditions and bridge cultural barriers in a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society where tensions had often occurred (p. 71).

Literature on heutagogy in the performing arts in Malaysia is scarce, therefore the next section provides feedback on heutagogy in other disciplines. Research conducted at three higher education institutions in the United Kingdom showed that the heutagogical approach facilitated “learner control of learning, collaborative reflection, learner’s self-perception and professional development, and critical thinking and reflection developing independent ideas, and self-confidence” (Canning & Callan, 2010). Heutagogy has been credited with equipping teachers with skills for the complex learning environment, enhancing researcher abilities in investigating new ideas and improving scaffolding in problem solving at University of Western Sydney in New South Wales, Australia (Ashton & Newman, 2006). In journalism education, students were able to produce their own news stories prior to work experience through self-determined learning (Mulrennan, 2018). Negative issues encountered in implementing heutagogy were academic resistance to change, increased expenses on technology, continued emphasis on assessment and a lack of focus on the learning process (Ashton & Newman, 2006; Lee & McCoughlin, 2007).

## Objectives

This article presents responses to the heutagogy approach focusing on two aspects: a) self-determination and b) knowledge sharing through technology. The objectives of the research were to:

1. Examine the responses to the self-determination and knowledge sharing through technological aspects of heutagogy.
2. Analyse the thought processes of researchers in addressing challenges faced in implementing heutagogy.
3. Recommend directions in achieving future work skills.

## Methodology

This research used the *a/r/tography* approach to analyse participants' responses to heutagogy. *A/r/tography* is similar to an understanding of action research that does not follow a prescribed plan or method. It is an inductive study that delves into continuous inquiry dedicated to "asking questions, gathering information and analyzing that information before asking further questions and enacting more living inquiry" (Given, 2008, p. 26). *A/r/tographers* are not limited to the academic circle; they may be practicing artists, teachers, learners and students (Given, 2008, p. 27). In *A/r/tography*, it is not mandatory to identify specific problems that need solving through methodological protocols that lead to research findings. Instead, while it may hypothesize problems, its aim is to engage in continuous inquiry through an inductive approach that eventually arrives at a deeper understanding of arising issues. Unlike action research in education which focuses on studying the effectiveness of one method through a cycle of linear actions of planning, action, reflection and revisions, the actions taken in the *a/r/tography* approach is not necessarily in the linear pattern prescribed in action research. *A/r/tographers* use diverse approaches to problem solving that may range from instant action to lengthy reflections before contemplations. A flash of past unsolved problems, presented in the future within a different context, could lead to immediate solutions. Many of the actions taken do not follow a planned, systematic approach of conventional action research as they may derive from lateral, unconventionally structured or even unpredictable actions in response to intuition. *A/r/tography* is more suitable for poets, dancers, musicians, performers, visual artists and others whose practices are situated within complex environments. In *a/r/tography*,

inquiring in these contexts requires a commitment to an evolution of questions within living inquiry process

of practitioners ... this means an ongoing quest for understanding that is timely, emergent, generative and responsive for those involved ... artists seek challenges that interrupt taken-for-granted ways of knowing as to see, hear, and experience the world differently...*A/r/tographical* practices are not comfortable habits but rather the challenging practices of learning to question differences and perceive differently in and through time ... theory and practice are not divided but rather folded together through live experiences and inquiry. (Given, 2008, p. 26)

Our research team conducted 14 workshops that introduced students to basic performing arts skills for creative improvisation. Six fieldtrips to interview shop owners were carried out and six workshops were conducted to compose and choreograph the performances of three shop houses (Figure 1). There were a total of 20 participants consisting of 14-year-old secondary school students from a national public school located within a semi-urban town in Malaysia. The students volunteered to participate in our local living heritage musical performance. We sought participants who were determined to learn even though they had no formal training in the performing arts. Due to the self-determined approach used, attendance was not forced, therefore, the final number of students that ultimately participated in the workshops leading to the performance were only 8 students.

Our researchers were both insiders and emic to the research project. A form of ethnography also emerged as we tried to understand the behaviour of the participants during class reflections, informal small talks prior to the workshops or while driving the participants to town for fieldwork. Among ourselves, the team continuously discussed ongoing issues, challenges and dilemmas encountered with the participants of different characters and cultural backgrounds.

We emphasize that heutagogy does not replace the development of specific singing styles or movement patterns that require transmission through pedagogical approaches. Therefore, the development of musical, movement and theatrical skills still required a pedagogical approach during training sessions. Our researchers had to select activities whereby heutagogy could be introduced. This research will discuss three activities whereby heutagogy was explored.

1. Activity 1 – Understanding duration of sound through movement
2. Activity 2 – Performing a shop house
3. Activity 3 – Inculcating self-regulated attendance



Figure 1: The multi-cultural living heritages of shop houses on Jalan Besar, Tanjong Malim.

We documented these components through the a/r/tography method – a) Aim of activity; b) Description of activity; c) Heutagogy approach; d) Responses; e) Reflection; f) Action upon reflection; g) Responses to revision h) Summary of activity. In the following section, we critically reflected on selected activities whereby the heutagogy approach had significant impact.

## Results and Findings

In this section, we present our thought processes during workshop sessions exploring the heutagogy approach with the participants. We selected some activities used to train participants in performing arts skills to explore aspects of self-determination and knowledge-sharing through technology.

### Activity 1

Understanding duration of sound through movement

#### *Aim of activity*

This aim of 'Activity 1' was to inculcate the understanding of sound duration in space through movement.

#### *Description of activity*

Participants were required to observe, record and recreate the sounds and movements inspired by the natural environment and culture from their hometown. Some examples included using a *wok* (Chinese frying pan) to a duple meter and frying *kuay teow* (flat noodles) or twirling *roti canai* (flat bread) in circular movements. The participants were asked to associate each movement with quarter, half or whole notes.

#### *Heutagogy*

This activity focused on how technology and social media are able to enhance "self-determined learning". It is based on the idea that knowledge sharing through social media accelerates the dissemination of information. We encouraged participants of our workshop to record sounds and movements they found interesting in their hometown using their mobile phones. As part of "self-determined

learning”, the participants were given the freedom to select sounds and movements from the natural environment and everyday activities that appealed to them. Participants were then asked to share these videos in the participants’ WhatsApp and Facebook accounts. It was hoped that this activity would inspire ideas for creative performance in the next workshop.

### *Responses*

The participants showed little response in recording the sounds and movements of their local town and natural environment. They were also not active in posting any videos in the participants’ WhatsApp and Facebook accounts.

### *Reflection*

In order to identify the lack of interest in this assigned activity, we conducted a game known as the Categorization Game. Participants were asked to group themselves into common themes. The game revealed that only a handful of students owned personal mobile phones while many others had to borrow their parents’ mobile phones for use. The game also indicated that students were more inclined to use Instagram rather than Facebook. To confirm this, we conducted a written questionnaire on Internet accessibility and their usage of social media. The participants’ answers confirmed the information gathered from the Categorization Game. It also revealed that participants had limited access to mobile phones, as school did not allow them to use their devices during school hours. Therefore, searching for information and knowledge in school was limited.

### *Action upon reflection*

Our researchers took the initiative to post videos of sounds and movements associated with different sound durations from the local environment. We took the lead in creating awareness, showing how each individual’s interest could open a new portal of knowledge to every group member. We also created a new Instagram account and stopped using the Facebook account.

### *Responses to revision*

There were better responses to knowledge sharing on Instagram and WhatsApp but these were not completely satisfactory.

### *Summary of activity*

The responses to the first activity revealed that participants in our heritage project lacked awareness of their hometown’s rich natural environment and multicultural heritage. This may be due to the lack of emphasis on learning about local heritages and the natural

environment in the national school curriculum. Secondly, we discovered that many participants from this semi-urban town in Malaysia did not own their mobile phone. They also did not have instant access to the Internet or knowledge sharing through social media. In addition, the school’s rules for not allowing participants to bring a mobile phone to school impeded the acceleration of self-determined learning. We also discovered that our Generation Z project participants were more inclined to use Instagram as a medium for social media. Unlike Generations X and Y who tend to write and share knowledge of news through Facebook, Generation Z preferred to express themselves with fewer words and more visuals. They preferred sharing personal recreational activities rather than academic knowledge through social media. Last but not least, in order for the heutagogy approach to be successful, national schools must have a good monitoring system that will facilitate the use of the Internet to enhance academic excellence rather than to use it merely as a social media tool.

## **Activity 2**

Performing a heritage shop house

### *Aim of activity*

The aim of Activity 2 was to mobilise participants to discover and appreciate the history of the shop houses in their hometown. Self-determined learning was cultivated when participants were given the freedom to interview shopkeepers from their hometown and choose sounds and movements they found interesting for choreographing a performance.

### *Description of activity*

The participants were assigned to create a performance of a shop house they visited in their hometown. The performance would combine the historical origins and sounds and movements they had experienced from the shop. The participants recorded sounds and movements they found interesting during their visit to their selected shop house. The shops or places visited were an Indian Muslim restaurant, a Malay village town, a Chinese medicinal herb shop, a watch and clock shop, biscuit and candy shop and a tailor shop.

### *Heutagogy*

Self-determination was incorporated whereby the students formed their own interview questions and wrote narratives of their interviews. They were also given the freedom to select and record the sounds and movements that inspired them using their mobile phones.

Our researchers did not intervene in the choices made. Rather, we helped refine the participants' musical ideas and movements into an organized performance.

### Responses

The participants tended to rely heavily on our researchers to create the composition and choreography of their final performance. They had good ideas but had difficulty expanding and developing their ideas into a musical performance.

### Reflection

During our performing arts workshops sessions, we realized that our secondary school participants lacked basic musical training, dance instruction and acting skills. Had they received training in these areas during their primary school education, they would have acquired skills of creativity, collaboration, communication and critical thinking. This lack of skills hindered our researchers from facilitating the development of more creative performances stemming from the participants' concepts and ideas.

### Action upon reflection

While driving our participants to interviews or chatting with them before workshops commenced, our researchers realised that each participant had specific musical interests. We also noticed that four to five participants enjoyed singing and dancing to the K-pop music videos of BTS, a Korean music group. Rather than spending lengthy periods training the participants in basic music and movement skills, we decided to capitalise on this interest to develop a performance based on a selected shop. We asked the group to integrate some ideas from BTS' music and dance into the shop houses they had visited. Our researchers tried to trigger and nurture the students' ideas for the performance of *Kedai Jam Ban Lee*, a watch and clock shop, through the participants' interest in one of BTS' popular songs called *DDaeng*. Our researchers assisted the participants in adapting the music and rhythm of this song to represent the watch and clock shop. Eventually, a performance of this shop was created from the adaptation of *DDaeng* (Figure 2).

A second self-determined, relatively successful activity was a song composition written by the participants, which illustrated their experience at the Apollo tailor shop (Figure 3). The participants wrote the lyrics and sung it in a musical style that was a cross between reciting and singing. Our researchers attempted to adjust the singing by trying to get the participants to sing the song according to the western diatonic scale, using a



**Figure 2:** Students adapting ideas from the BTS music video, "DDaeng", a K-pop phenomenal group from Korea to create the music and choreography of *Kedai Jam Ban Lee* (Ban Lee Watch and Clock Shop).

xylophone to guide their pitches. Since the participants were not trained in western music, this attempt was not successful and created confusion. We then decided to allow the participants to perform the song in their own self-taught singing style. At the same time, we introduced Malay drumming rhythms of the *kompang* (frame drum) to accompany the song they had written. The lyrics of the song were:

Song Text 1	Apollo Tailor Shop
Malay	English
<i>Tukang jahit, tukang jahit</i>	Tailor, tailor
<i>Saya belum jahit baju melayu</i>	I have not sewn my Malay attire
<i>Uncle boleh kamu</i>	Uncle, could you please ...
<i>Perayaan sudah dekat-dekat</i>	The festival is near
<i>Hari raya aaaa</i>	Celebration day ...
<i>Hari raya sudah dekat</i>	Celebration day is near
<i>Uncle boleh kamu</i>	Uncle, could you please ...
<i>Tolong saya uncle 4x</i>	Help me, uncle (4x)
<i>Tolong...</i>	Help



**Figure 3:** Students capturing the story, sounds and movements from 'Apollo Tailor shop'

While the participants did well in their musical representation, our researchers had to play a large role in facilitating the performance of the tailor shop. The participants lacked ideas in developing and expanding their ideas from movements observed in the shop to creative choreography. Due to time limitations, we choreographed stylized movements of workers sewing clothes on a sewing machine, cutting cloth with a scissors and taking cloth measurements.

The third performance was developed from the participants' interest in Malaysian food after interviewing the owner of Restoran Ghani, an Indian Muslim restaurant (Song Text 2; Figure 4). The participants created their own musical dialogue and movements to accompany scenes at the shop such as the *teh tarik* (pulled tea) movements, the twirling of *roti canai* (flat bread) and the ordering of different foods in various local languages. During the workshop, we discovered that one of the quieter students had an interest in rap music. We encouraged him to write a rap about the diverse selection of food in Restoran Ghani. He acquired help from his friends in writing the text while we taught another identified participant who had a knack for drumming to create rhythmic patterns on a Malay double headed drum to accompany the rap. The rapper and drummer were well coordinated while the rest of the participants supported the performance by using expressive movements that conveyed their enthusiasm over the rap rendition.



**Figure 4:** A restaurant worked making *roti canai* (flat bread) at Restoran Ghani along Jalan Besar in Tanjong Malim town.

independently creating a performance of these stories due to their lack of training in the performing arts. Our researchers agreed that it did not matter whether the performance incorporated traditional, western classical or modern elements; exposure to performing arts itself enhances creative and critical thinking skills. Even though these participants did not have basic training in music and movement skills from western and non-western traditions, our researchers believed that as facilitators, we needed to capitalize on the participants' current knowledge and interest in order to facilitate the development of a performance in a short period of time. This move to nurture the participants' interest in Korean hip-hop, rap and local singing styles into a more refined performance proved successful.

#### Song Text 2

#### Rapping Restoran Ghani

Malay	English
<i>Roti canai satu tolong</i>	One <i>roti canai</i> , flood it with lots of gravy
<i>banjirkan kuah</i>	
<i>Kalau engkau sangat handal</i>	If you are smart, please don't
<i>tolong jangan main bedal</i>	play dumb
<i>Aku tak nak campur sambal</i>	Please don't mix it with <i>sambal</i> ,
<i>cuma banjirkan kuah dal</i>	just drench it in <i>dhal</i>
<i>Kalau engkau usahlah buat</i>	If it is you, never mind, I might
<i>nanti aku jadi gatal</i>	be tempted
<i>Aku nak milo ais satu</i>	I want one iced milo
<i>Tapi kurang ais batu</i>	With less ice please
<i>Tak nak tambah susu</i>	Please don't add too much milk
<i>Nanti aku badan lesu</i>	Later I might get sick
<i>Harap engkau faham</i>	I hope you understand
<i>Janganlah membisu</i>	Please don't keep quiet
<i>Takut nanti akau pergi cari</i>	Later I am afraid I might need
<i>tandas dulu</i>	to rush to the toilet

#### Summary

This activity revealed that while participants did well in forming their own interview questions and collecting sounds and movements, they were impeded from

#### Activity 3

Self-regulated attendance. Participants were given the choice to attend every workshop.

#### Aim

To inculcate self-regulated attendance and self-determination in attending scheduled workshops.

#### Description of activity

Students were informed that workshops would be held twice a week from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. The workshops were held before their afternoon school session that began at 1:00 pm. Online attendance was taken and a WhatsApp group was formed to remind participants of scheduling.

#### Heutagogy

Our facilitators encouraged attendance but did not make it mandatory. The choice to attend was left to the participants, as it was a voluntary extra-curricular activity.



### *Responses*

An attendance trend was detected: From a total of 20 students, only eight participants managed to attend the sessions regularly until the final performance. Many participants were still dependent on the instructional approach to teaching and learning. They did not feel concerned that the performance date was drawing closer and were still unprepared. They seemed to believe it was the researchers' responsibility to ensure a good performance from them.

### *Reflection*

Participants were used to an autocratic approach to ensure attendance to particular events and classes. Through self-evaluation and empathy for the participants, our researchers reflected on the lack of dedication by some students to our workshops. We understood that this project was an additional extra-curricular activity outside their normal schooling hours. If participants were given the liberty to attend or not attend the workshops without a gift as part of their participation, chances were not many would have been interested. After the project ended a questionnaire was distributed to the eight remaining participants. It showed that students mainly experienced transportation problems. The questionnaire revealed that our final eight participants were self-motivated to attend the workshops, as they desired to be more outstanding and different from their schoolmates.

### *Action upon reflection*

As facilitators, our researchers attempted to cultivate interest in the workshops by developing participants' trust and belief. Our researchers navigated between reprimanding the participants and showing empathy towards them. They were allowed absences during school holidays, cultural holidays and examination weeks.

### *Summary*

Several participants came to understand the importance of this research to their local community and their personal growth. The participants' trust in the facilitators was among the guiding lights that kept them motivated. Our researchers' efforts to cultivate self-determined learning was successful with the final eight student-participants. Eventually, our researchers only partially implemented self-determined learning as much of our time was focused on nurturing the concept of 'self-determined' learning. We managed to sow the seeds of self-determined learning among the eight participants who stayed on until the end.

### **Conclusion**

The summaries of activities 1–3 reveal that critical thinking, creativity, communication and collaboration (4C's) skills were underdeveloped among the participants. We believe this is largely due to Teacher-Centred Learning that has been grounded into the students, therefore creating automated dependency on their teachers for instruction. Our researchers had to make much effort to trigger critical thinking and creativity among the participants especially during their interviews with shop house owners and recording sounds and movements of shops. The participants were only beginning to become aware that the ticking of the clock in the watch shop could be manifested into music and dance. Even with this awareness, the lack of training on how to create music or use their bodies to manifest ideas became setbacks to developing a creative musical performance.

Second, our findings reveal that access to personal mobile technology is limited by school regulations and parents' financial status. The participants were not able to freely access the Internet or mobile technology in school. This impeded them from accessing information and knowledge available online. It also hindered knowledge-sharing through technological processes that would have collectively inspired and motivated participant involvement. Ideas from friends triggered threads of other ideas among the group. Our researchers believe that students should be able have monitored access to the Internet in school. Rules and regulations on technology usage should be implemented in educational institutions. If these strategies are not implemented soon, Generation Z will not be able to compete in future job skills which require diverse knowledge churned into creative mediums.

Our researchers found it difficult to document and present their thought processes into a more scientific and empirical approach. This article only captures some of the thought processes of our researchers. We believe that a video (forthcoming) describing the journey would be more effective in telling our story. However, we also think it is necessary to organize our thoughts into a more empirical approach to reach different audiences or influence current organizations that have the power to implement change. Lastly, although the findings appear unmotivating, they indicate important issues in education. Despite these issues, the 8 participants who remained excelled in their final musical performance, which was presented at an international conference in 2018 (Chan, 2021).

## Competing Interests Statement

All authors have read and approved the manuscript and take full responsibility for its contents. No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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