

The Application of 21st Century Education in Teaching Arts Studies in Private Primary Schools

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Abstract

The understanding of teachers on 21st Century Learning (PAK21) helps in determining the best learning strategy to be integrated effectively into a classroom. This research is aimed to explore the implementation of PAK21 that is applied by Arts Studies teachers in private primary schools. Specifically, this study investigates the strategies employed by the teachers as well as the effectiveness of the PAK21 method on the pupils. This study is a qualitative case study. The research data collected are from interviews, observations and document analyses in order to provide a clear view of the implementation of PAK21. Participants of the study comprised of 2 teachers and 2 pupils who were selected through purposive sampling. The results from the study showed that one of the teachers practiced the PAK21 strategy in teaching and learning in Arts Studies. Among the strategies implemented by the teacher are the think-pair share, gallery walk, round table, and hot seat. These strategies gave positive effects on the pupils, as they are more confident, active and collaborative during teaching and learning session. Therefore, this study suggests that teachers from private primary schools should be given appropriate courses and training in order to carry out the PAK21 method thoroughly, as this approach is shown to give positive effects on the pupils.

Keywords: PAK21, Arts Studies, Private Primary School, Case Study, Teaching Strategies

Introduction

The classroom is the root to where changes occur in the field of education. In order to prepare the 21st century pupils to compete at a global stage, they need to be equipped with the four skills (4C), i.e. collaboration, communication, critical thinking and creativity (Roekel, 2017). Fundamentally, the 21st Century Education suggests a learning that employs state-of-the-art methods to ensure that pupils are not passive in the classroom such as in the era of 'spoon-feeding' information to the pupils. They must not only remain quiet in class, but pupils of the 21st century must be more actively involved throughout the teaching and learning process. Through the appropriate activities such as those contained in PAK21, which include think-pair share, gallery walk, round table and hot seat, the teaching and learning sessions for the Arts Studies subject can be more interesting. It is crucial that PAK21 is implemented because it stimulates change in teaching techniques in order to prepare the pupils to be more assertive and competent, especially when it comes to their careers later on.

The implementation of the 4C skills in PAK21 in the Arts Studies subject is very important. To be continuously competitive, the human capital produced must not only be

capable of achieving something that has not been done before, but it must not be replaceable or replicated by computers (Gasser, 2011). Therefore the 4C skills play important roles in producing human capital that is keen, creative, innovative, as well as capable of competing in the Industrial Revolution 4.0.

Problem Statement

Present-day education is not only aimed to nurture pupils that are balanced and well-rounded, but to instill in them the PAK21 skills, which encompass critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and creativity (4C). With the implementation of the PAK21 skills among pupils, it is hoped that they are better equipped with the skills to lead and collaborate with others. However, there are several challenges in the implementation of PAK21 in schools especially in private schools. The PAK21 challenge actually needs to be observed from a larger and wider perspective, which is from the aspect of the purpose of education itself, and that is to realize the National Education Philosophy (NEP) (PPPM, 2013-2025). PAK21 is not a single objective, however it is a method to achieve what is desired by the NEP in order to develop balanced and well-rounded individuals (Ismail, 2018).

The knowledge and understanding of teachers in the implementation of learning art from the context of PAK21 is critical. In conjunction with the rapidly growing economy and global industry, teachers must be well-prepared in order to face the challenges of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Teachers must have a clear understanding with regard to the latest technology especially to reinforce the teaching and learning (TnL, or *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran, PdP*) sessions in class. The learning environment is now different, hence as a teacher, their knowledge must align or exceed the pupils', especially when the latest technology is involved (Sujak, 2018).

The PAK21 method is often the topic for debate in establishing values and increasing the motivation in pupils. Passive teaching without the proper methods, strategies, approaches, and techniques would lead to a weak teaching and learning process that would contribute to the decrease in the pupils' performance. The issue of time to prepare materials and controlled time in class also serves as a limitation in the implementation of cooperative teaching and learning.

The teachers' mastery from the aspect of knowledge and teaching in the PAK21 era needs to be taken seriously because teachers prefer to teach in a conventional manner rather than applying methods and teaching techniques that consist of Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) that centralizes on the pupils. Besides that, Ismail & Ismail (2018) stated that the preparation by teachers in applying the learning concept of the 21st century (PAK21) is about to produce teachers who are competent and able to fulfill the current education challenges in the future. Teachers are also more likely to encourage one-way teaching and learning that leads to the lesson feeling dull and encourages a passive attitude in pupils while in class. The chalk and talk method is a popular culture among school teachers that needs to be obsolete as suggested by Ting and Woo (2005), who stated that the chalk and talk method should be replaced by the technology that is available today. According to Hamid et al, the comprehension of pupils becomes more difficult when faced with a weak delivery by the teacher, aside from having limited knowledge on the subject matter. Carlgren (2013) also stated that one of the factors in the weakness of pupils in mastering communication, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills are stemmed from the teachers.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the learning strategies of PAK21 that are applied by teachers in private schools
2. To study the effects of implementing PAK-21 in the Arts Studies subject on private school pupils

Research Questions

1. What are the strategies from the 21st Century learning (PAK21) used by teachers in private schools?
2. What are the effects of implementing PAK21 Arts Studies to private school pupils?

Literature Review

PAK21 is not merely centralized on technology, but it is rather a vehicle to its approach that focuses on the four main principles, which are collaborative, creative, critical thinking, and communication skills (KPM, 2012). According to Khalid (2018), PAK21 is not an objective, but one of the methods for us to achieve what is aimed by NEP, to develop balanced and well-rounded individuals. In the context of our national education, PAK21 must be based on the values that represent us as the people of Malaysia. PAK21 can still be implemented without advanced technology. There are several different thoughts on the definitions of 21st century education. The term is also used in various ways, including the "21st century class", "21st century education", "21st century learning", and "21st century learning and teaching". Regardless of the definition given, the 21st Century Education shares the same characteristic, which is a concept that is introduced to prepare lessons that are driven by the pupils and to create a learning environment that is active and encourages the pupils to learn actively in a collaborative way either with learning aid materials, with friends, teachers and their surroundings. The teachers then act as guidance who are always encouraging their pupils to think until they are capable to solve problems and make decisions, and consequently acquire good communication skills. With regard to the above, teachers must possess a specific set of skills as the educators of the 21st century. According to Radin & Yasin (2018), teachers and pupils are able to employ the skills from the 21st Century Education even though the implementation level is at the beginning stages with the application of the most basic methods.

PAK21 pupils must master the 4C skill set. The 4C skill set referred here includes creativity, critical thinking, collaborative and communication. As a result from the 21st century learning, it is expected that the pupils are able to make connections, are perceptive when asking questions, confident when communicating, flexible, are not willing to give up easily, critically skilled, daring to try and with admirable personalities (Buletin Anjakan Bil. 4 2015)

There are six characteristics of the 21st century teacher, which are their mastery of the subject specifically the curriculum, skillful and well-versed in pedagogy, understanding the pupils' development and supportive of them, understand the learning psychology, possesses skills in counselling, and able to utilize the latest technology (Buletin Transformasi Pendidikan Malaysia bil 5/2015). 21st century teaching and learning is introduced consistently with the implementation of the Standard Curriculum for Primary Schools (KSSR). The understanding of the curriculum is one of the foundations of basic knowledge that needs to be mastered by teachers. After the curriculum is shaped and introduced, the group of

executors of the curriculum, which are the teachers, must play an important role to ensure that the objective contained in the curriculum is able to turn into a reality.

The implementation of PAK21 in the classroom is also very relevant in the context of education 4.0, which refers to the Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0). IR 4.0 is a form of development in the civilization and culture of mankind (Mohamad, 2018). IR 4.0 is closely related to the modern application, control of information and the introduction to the modern era of communication aside from the additions of the usage of smart devices in most of our daily goings-on. This is relevant in the hadith by Rasulullah p.b.u.h. as narrated by At-Tirmizi who spoke of an era where the time is short, the distance has been reduced and communication becomes closer than ever (Nor, 2017).

In the context of PAK21, fellow educators must equip themselves with the knowledge of information and communication technology (ICT), which will in turn allow them to face the challenges of IR 4.0. Education must adapt to the new methods of teaching that aligns with the rapidly growing technology. This matter is closely related to the demands required in Industry 4.0 that is based on computer technology and automation. Human resources must be exposed to the need to fully-equip one's ability to handle the demands of Industry 4.0. All of this can be achieved from human resources training and development. According to Mohamed (2018), the skills that need to be focused on by human resources involved five important components, which are critical thinking, problem solving, communication, collaboration, creativity, and emotional wellbeing. According to Malik (2018), principle, ethics and responsibility in moving the Industry Revolution 4.0 era with the development of digital innovation, and the creation of the Internet of Things, and the practitioners of media are responsible in shaping the digital generation as well as the empowerment of individuals. The aspect that is stressed here is relevant in the context of PAK21 learning and must be mastered by the pupils.

Teachers are encouraged to apply approaches and strategies that are appropriate with the teaching of Visual Arts. The present day education system requires pupils to explore for themselves and use different approaches such as situated cognition, cognitive apprenticeship scaffolding, tutoring, and cooperative and collaborative learning. This approach can help pupils explore knowledge to allow them to learn for themselves on how to solve learning problems not only in school, but also in their day to day lives. The social constructivism approach lines up with group learning, brainstorming, collaborative, etc., and therefore giving focus on the tasks that involve interactions and therefore can apply to the memory strategy to emphasize on the exploration of new information (Nachiappan, Jantan & Shukor, 2008; Matarid, Sobh, & Ahmed, 2018).

In the Arts Studies for instance, the teachers can help pupils build an understanding and new knowledge. Besides that, pupils can also make their own interpretations based on the information available and the newly-received information. Pupils can also apply their new knowledge in artwork-making, which are conducted by them. With this method, pupils are able to construct their own understanding on learning about visuals. Pupils are certainly encouraged to expand on the main ideas into branches of new ideas so that they would produce artwork that are more creative, aesthetic, and in a higher quality. This matter is supported by Sani (2016), who stated that activities should be coordinated to encourage pupils to think creatively and evoking their interests in pursuing the field of arts as well as to educate them to appreciate art and simultaneously coax them in the spirit of teamwork and boost their confidence as an individual or as a group. For example, through the basic skill of colour theory, pupils are able to show their ideas by combining the basic colours with

secondary colours to produce new colours with the aim to apply them in their visual art pieces. This activity can be done during cooperative learning whereby the teacher would encourage the pupils to discuss between themselves and with the teachers. From this constructivism method of learning, the pupils will enjoy themselves better, and it would be easier for them to remember what is learnt, alongside sharpening their socializing skills so that the pupils can think and be confident from the interactions during the teaching and learning sessions, which aligns with the suggestion by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (KPM, 2012) via an approach that focuses on the four main principles, i.e. collaborative, creative, critical thinking and communication (4C).

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative case study in the gathering and analyzing of data. A case study is a hands-on method of collecting and analyzing data to witness the real situation by conducting observations, interviews and document analyses in order to acquire answers to the questions that arise. The researcher also studied, examined, and summarized in the best way possible in order to provide a clear picture on the implementation of PAK21.

Research Sample

This research is carried out on two visual arts subject teachers and two pupils from two Private Primary Schools in Selangor. The selection of the research samples were made by purposive sampling. The research samples are chosen based on the criteria determined that are suitable with the current study, which include that they must be able to invest in terms of commitment and cooperation, as well as are able to provide the necessary information needed.

Data Collection Method

This research employed the methods of observing, interviewing and document analyses to collect data. Observation is the main method used to record and acquire information throughout the learning session. When observation takes place, the researcher has recorded everything that took place in the observation record form that is marked with the code P01.

Besides that, another method utilized by the researcher is a structured interview, which was done by providing formal and structured questions but the researcher was given the freedom to further delve into the answers that are given by the research participants. All documents related to the interview are marked with the code T01. On the other hand, the document research employed the artwork produced by pupils that has been presented during the art appreciation session at the end of a teaching and learning session.

Research Findings and Discussion

The findings of this research are shown and presented by naming the teacher research participants as Research Participant 1 (PK1), Research Participant 2 (PK2) and the pupils as Informant A (IA), and Informant B (IB) to answer the research questions proposed.

PAK21 Learning Strategy

Based on the observation data and interviews that are obtained from the 2 teachers, the research has found that only one teacher practices the PAK21 strategy completely during the teaching and learning session of the Arts Studies subject, whereby the teacher has mastered the subject that was taught, is skilful and competent in pedagogy, understood the

development of the pupils, understood the learning psychology, and is masterful in the usage of technology. These are the characteristics of the 21st century teacher.

The outcome from the interview with the teacher found that Research Participant 1 (PK1) is skilful in the application of activities that are stated in PAK21. The researcher observed that Research Participant 1 (PK1) understood about the process in implementing PAK21 during teaching and learning session, such as taking up the activity of role playing. The teacher would ask the pupils to be in groups. They were then given the task to produce puppets. After the colouring activity, the pupils were asked to describe the art pieces that were created.

“I had fun while making this puppet. The teacher divided us into groups and what was more fun was that we got to act out the puppets that we made.” (IA).

According to Research Participant 1 (PK1),

“There were successful activities that the pupils enjoyed such as acting, especially when their art pieces are used as characters but there are also activities that are not as successfully done and the pupils were not paying enough attention”. (PK1)

“Yes, I’ve used teaching aid that implemented the use of technology such as YouTube and Google to make the class more fun and interesting”. (PK1)

For Research Participant 2 (PK2), who stated to not have conducted the PAK21 methods because they feel that they are not competent enough and not exposed to the methods in carrying out those activities during teaching and learning session. According to Research Participant 2:

“I didn’t know what PAK21 is and what are the activities involved. Because I don’t know about PAK21 because we teach as we usually do, by using laptops, showing examples and instructing the pupils to follow the steps that we’ve shown them. That’s all.” (PK2)

This research found that the PAK21 strategy that is used by teachers are still at a low level, whereby not all private school teachers are able to use the PAK21 strategy during the teaching and learning session. This situation has resulted in the learning process shaped by PAK21 not be fully taken advantage of even though they have the knowledge related to technology. The 4C skills (collaboration, communication, thinking critically, creativity) should be taken into account so that the teaching and learning sessions become more interesting and effective. The researcher found that the above occurred because the teachers were not given the appropriate courses and they were not in the Visual Arts Studies option. This matter echoes with the study by Ismail and Ismail (2018), who stated that teachers need to be given exposure in terms of theory and practice when it comes to creative, critical thinking, collaborative, and communicative concepts.

The Effects of Implementing PAK21

Besides that, the effects of implementing PAK21 activities by Research Participant 1 are found to be increasing the pupils’ comprehension in the learning process. From the observation that was carried out, it is found that pupils were able to explain what they have learnt in the form of appreciation, and they are able to explain about the process of creating their puppets. The clear and interesting presentation by teachers has prompted the pupils to be more active and collaborative during the teaching and learning session. The pupils are able to create

pieces that are more interesting. This is the result of the implementation of the creative collaborative method during the teaching and learning session, which concluded with an appreciation session, i.e. the role play using the puppets that they have produced. This is supported during the observation method that was conducted as follows,

“The teacher wants to ensure that the pupils are having fun during the teaching and learning session, so the teacher uses a collaborative method to ensure that they enjoy themselves”. (PK1)

“When the pupils started to interact among themselves, the teacher will interact with the pupils and ask about the process of making puppets. When they are able to answer well, I am thrilled as well”. (PK1)

Through the PAK21 activities that have taken place, the pupils are able to apply their knowledge and understanding in the language of visual arts on their pieces during the role playing session and the artwork appreciation session of their own pieces and of their friends based on the language of visual arts, art history and culture. The findings resonate with the study conducted by Ainun, Zamri and Muna (2017); Sangakala, Ahmed, & Pahi, (2016) who found that the utilization of 21st century skills gives positive effects on pupils. They enjoy themselves when the teacher applied the 21st century skills in Bahasa Melayu PdPc subject in class. The same goes to the study conducted by Ainun, Zamri and Muna (2017) who stated that the influence of 21st century learning has given positive effects in terms of behaviour, motivation and the pupils’ achievements during teaching and learning sessions. The application of PAK21 through suitable activities have given positive effects on the pupils as well as have helped them become more confident, active and collaborative during teaching and learning sessions.

“The teachers ask us to work together while we make the puppets. We discussed among ourselves and we have distributed the tasks when we work as a team. Everyone did their job well because we know what our tasks are”. (IA)

However, for Informant B who was a pupil for Research Participant 2 (PK2), despite still being able to produce an interesting puppet, the pupils still lacked confidence when it comes to making a puppet because for Informant B, the presentation of the teacher is not clear and they are not bold enough to ask questions. The creations of puppets were also not completed within the given period of time. This is because the teacher used a conventional method when teaching, which is the relay of information, giving examples on a slide, and subsequently the pupils are required to complete their tasks individually.

The findings from the interview also showed that the pupils were lacking in self confidence and they were unable to ask questions when they do not understand something.

“I don’t understand how to tie this string. I’m scared to ask!”. (IB)

“They are still lacking in confidence when they want to ask questions. It’s like they’re scared”. (PK2)

An interview conducted showed that Research Participant 2 is still aware that the activities that are listed in PAK21 is very interesting, more relaxed and easier to understand by the pupils, but the execution would require time and a clear understanding on their behalf. According to Research Participant 2,

“Now I understand the meaning of PAK21, I’ve tried to apply some methods but I didn’t know that it was PAK21 because we were not exposed to them before”. (PK2)

To produce pupils who are active, confident and collaborative, it would require a creative teacher during the teaching and learning sessions to allow the pupils to have fun in producing their artwork during the teaching and learning sessions. This corresponds with the views of

Adam (2017) who stated that a teacher's creativity is crucial to ensure that the teaching and learning process takes place in a fun, cheerful and effective environment. Hence the process of teaching and learning will evoke their curiosity, imagination, teamwork, healthy competition and also recognition.

Conclusion and Suggestions

The curriculum of Arts Studies contained activities that encourage pupils to think in a critical and creative manner, as well as prompting them to explore and realize ideas from different sources, studies and technology through the production of an artwork. The success of a teacher in teaching a subject is influenced by several different aspects. The correct process of carrying out PAK21 as well as an interesting strategy would produce an interesting teaching and learning environment. The pupils will be more creative, innovative and they would possess the 4C skills if the teachers play their roles in educating them, and in addition to using the technological skills to align with the Industrial Revolution 4.0, then the teaching and learning sessions will give a better input to the pupils as a means to prepare them for employment in the future. In conclusion, the application of PAK21 in the Arts Studies subject can give positive effects on the pupils. Pupils are notably more confident, active and collaborative during the teaching and learning sessions.

Hence, the research suggests that private primary school teachers should be given appropriate courses and training in order to completely implement PAK21, seeing that this approach gives positive effects on the pupils. The teachers' determination to learn and practice the knowledge that they have is very important as this method is more relevant with the current context that is consistent with the challenging development of education 4.0.

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