

Factors of Teachers' Creativity Practice in the 21st Century Learning

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Abstract

21st century learning is a new revolution in the world of education that demands futuristic skills whereby creative and critical thinking skills are needed in order to produce students who are able to compete globally. One of the elements that teachers need to implement in 21st century learning is the element of creativity. This is in line with the policy introduced by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia (MOE) in fulfilling the objectives of Malaysia Education Blueprint (PPPM 2013-2025) which emphasizes on impactful teaching to produce more students who are creative in understanding a learning topic in a clearer and an easier manner. Teachers are the main implementing agents in realising this effort. Therefore, in this concept paper, the researcher will further elaborate on factors that encourage the practice of creativity among teachers as an alternative that can enhance 21st century teaching and learning activities. This concept paper uses literature review by analysing previous studies. The findings show that factors contributing to teachers' practice of creativity in 21st century teaching and learning include teachers' readiness, the mastery of pedagogy and curriculum, thinking styles, personality and motivation. Therefore, to ensure Malaysia education system continues to develop and be at par with other developing countries as well as being relevant with current demands, teachers must always be proactive and open in facing the challenges due to the transformation in the education system. It is hoped this concept paper will help educators in increasing their self-competence through the practice of creative teaching.

Keywords: factors, education, educators, creativity practice, 21st century teaching and learning

Introduction

Education is one of the essential key elements that contributes to the progress and civilization of a country. Society, especially educators should be optimistic about the changes that are taking place in the national education system in order to produce a knowledgeable society that is able to adapt to all the ever-changing life situations (Saleh & Rosli, 2019). 21st century education has been introduced as an initiative to open the minds of the public to be creative

and critical. The key figure behind the implementation of 21st century education is certainly the teachers. Teachers play an important role in applying the elements of creativity during the 21st century learning process and serve as a facilitator in the classroom so that teaching sessions can be implemented effectively and fun. The creativity of teachers is demanded not only through the delivery of curriculum content, but rather to focus on how the content is delivered to students (Mokhtar & Sahat, 2022). According to Sahri (2020), teachers do not need to be bound by a single method of teaching, but teachers can diversify the delivery by using more new approaches such as gallery walk, think-pair-share, roaming the room, three stray, one stay and other PAK 21 activities, depending on the diversity of students. In short, the creativity depends on the role of the teacher in ensuring that the implementation of the PdPc session positively impacts the creativity of the students.

According to Karwowski and Beghetto (2017) a teaching process that prioritizes elements of creativity has the potential to promote learning while maintaining knowledge over a long period of time. In addition, Erin (2016) emphasized that creativity has the potential to create positive changes in pedagogical practice, transforming the classroom into an active learning community. This indirectly helps generating first-class human capital who not only excel in academics, but also excel in physical, spiritual, emotion and intellectual aspects as emphasized in the National Philosophy of Education (NPE).

In developing creativity, Bramwell and Kronish (2017) stated that teachers are encouraged to create an open culture so that students are always highly motivated and feel safe. However, this culture needs to be restricted because it is feared that the issue of pupil behaviour control will occur as there are too much freedom given in creativity. This is also supported by Mokhtar & Sahat (2022) as well as Chan and Yuen (2014) in their study, where the practice of fostering creativity is an important role shouldered by teachers when teaching in the classroom.

Mokhtar & Sahat (2022) stated that creativity cannot be taught but it can be absorbed or practiced indirectly through observation of the surrounding environment in addition to planning the teaching activities systematically. This is because the teaching practices used by teachers vary, depending on the creativity they have and their ability to deliver the content. Each teacher has their own approach and technique in attracting their students to stay focus during the teaching and learning process. There are teachers who like to use humorous elements to attract students, some like to give gifts to active students in the classroom as a reward, some use clear and simple language, some use surprise as a set of induction, and many other interesting ways during the session. In the end, all the learning outcomes that are set can be achieved.

Thus, the practice of creativity by teachers in the 21st Century learning should be embodied to provide future generations with values, skills and knowledge that are comprehensive and relevant based on today's needs. Through this way, the country's education system will be formidable and able to compete internationally.

Problem Statement

The changing dimension of the new century teaching and learning requires Islamic Education teachers to incorporate elements of creativity into the teaching process. The practice of creativity is a must in ensuring that the teaching and facilitating process in the classroom runs smoothly and effectively.

Based on the literature analysis of recent studies, there are some issues that arise in the practice of creativity of Islamic Education teachers in the 21st century learning. Studies

conducted by Apandi and Razak (2022) found that student learning problems in the classroom are due to teachers being less and innovative in teaching activities. This is in line with the findings of Sulaiman and Wahid's (2021) study where their research findings revealed that creative teaching methods can create an active learning environment for students and avoid tensions during the teaching and learning process.

Also, findings by Jaafar and Said (2021) found that teachers who lack creativity and unwillingness to try to produce an innovation can make students difficult to learn *tajwid* better. This study supports the findings of their previous study which stated that weak students in learning *tajwid* will perform better if the teachers are more creative and innovative by taking into consideration the factor of diversity of students in the classroom. Aziz and Jaafar (2018); Wahab, et.al. (2017) and Mohamed (2016) also agreed with this fact that the weak students in learning the Quran are students who do not master *Jawi* and the *hijaiyah* letters due to non-creative and innovative teachers in teaching Islamic Education. In this regard, the role of teachers in fostering creativity during teaching and learning session is so important so that learners can experience exciting and fun learning environment.

Besides, according to Awi and Zulkifli (2021), teachers should strive to increase their expertise in creativity to produce effective learning environment. Their study shows that the teachers' creativity practice is still at a moderate level. In addition, in the study also, the Islamic Education teachers were highly recommended to be constantly aware of the transformations taking place in the education system as well as improve skills in various aspects.

Furthermore, Kamarudin and Taat (2020) when studying the 21st century educational challenges found that the internal and external factors were the cause of various barriers for teacher in teaching in the classroom. Among these challenges is the passive behaviour of students about learning that is hard to accept and understand the topics that the teachers' deliver. In addition, teachers face difficulties to adapt and solve teaching problems due to time constraints and ideas constraints, which have left teachers unable to pay full attention when teaching and facilitating. The findings of this study were supported by Zhaffar (2017) who found that the lack of creativity among teachers had led teachers to face problems of readiness and thinking skills in learning and facilitating, which results in them not embracing the role of teacher but to only simply complete assigned tasks of teaching, administrative and others. This will put the burden on Islamic Education teachers to ensure that the teaching process is holistic and effective.

In addition, the study of Ismail and Ismail (2018) explained that aspects of unconducive class environment, time constraints and lack of understanding of the 4C concept are among the problems faced when practicing the 21st century learning. The stated 4C concept includes the elements of creativity. The study by Noor and Ramli (2018) found that there were teachers who do not master the skills of Information and Communication Technology, implement a teacher-centred approach and some of them are unable to accept changes in the current education system. These are some of the challenges that the teachers must take seriously and overcome so that the education system does not fall short of its true goals. Rusdin (2018) stated that teacher's teaching weaknesses are due to the teaching strategies used. Therefore, Islamic Education teachers need to be aware of these factors so that the element of creativity can be applied in the 21st century learning.

Objectives

The objective of this concept paper is to identify factors impacting teachers' creativity in 21st century learning and learning session. It is hoped that upon knowing the factors, teachers can reflect on aspects that can be improved in applying creative teaching practices during the teaching process.

Creativity in the 21st Century Learning

Creativity in teaching is one of the important elements for a teacher. This is because the understanding and implementation of the teaching process can help teachers to achieve the learning objectives that have been planned. In addition, according to Majid and Ismail (2017), creativity has often been the subject of research in almost all areas of knowledge. Studies on creativity are broad and not limited to a period of time, space, place and field. Even according to Hope (2010), it can be seen from a variety of angles based on the angle at which one understands it and the background of one's knowledge. The practice of creativity has received the attention of many researchers, both local and abroad.

Among the abroad studies that discuss the theme of creativity are the studies by Kurniawan and Hasanah (2021). This study is about the role of administrators in one of Indonesia's schools in fostering teachers' teaching creativity especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. This study used a qualitative approach based on interview and observation methods. The findings showed that among the roles of administrators in fostering this practice of creativity are, a) the role of headmaster or principal as a 'role model', b) giving 'reward' and 'punishment', c) creating a healthy and conducive work environment, d) mentoring and staging, e) providing teachers with the opportunity to innovate and work, f) engaging teachers in training as well as PLCs and finally g) supporting teachers who are involved in various competitions especially in innovation competitions.

In addition, a study was conducted by Sukarman and Sultani (2019) on creativity in teaching Islamic Education teachers and their impact on student motivation. The study used a qualitative approach through observation methods which revealed that the teachers' creativity can increase student motivation in producing innovation. Creative teachers are teachers who are able to create a variety of learning activities so that the learning process is active, fun and not bored. Misra, Eyombo and Phillips (2019) in their study on minority students stated that policymakers and teachers should accommodate students of this new generation by providing a meaningful teaching and learning environment in the classroom. They suggested that game-based teaching creativity can provide a platform for minority students to be intrinsically motivated to stay focused during their teaching and learning process.

Besides, a study on creativity was also conducted by Amponsah, Kwesi and Ernest (2019). The findings showed that teachers in Ghana are not exposed to creative teaching practices even though they have the desire to do so. For example, in the syllabus of Information and Communication Technology, the researchers expected to see a variety of activities that will help foster creative learning among students. However, the situation did not happen. Instead, the learning objective only focused on introducing students to computer components and hardware, as well as creating 'new folder' and computer keyboard skills. This is because they think students should be encouraged to participate in activities and projects that will help them to think outside the box by using creative thinking.

Creative teachers are teachers who have their own principles, are not rigid and flexible. There are studies linking the aspect of creativity with 21st Century Learning. Among

them is the study by Awi and Zulkifli (2021) that explored the concept of creative elements, the practice of teacher creativity in teaching session as well as the challenges of Islamic Education teachers in the application of creative element. Not only that, the researcher also explained the concept of 21st Century Learning which is a turning point in today's education system. In addition, in the study of Ching, Rahim and Salamat (2020), there is a description of the 21st Century Learning Practice covering the application of 4C elements of communication, collaboration, criticality and creativity. This quantitative study revealed that student development is still at a moderate level.

In addition, creative teaching practices are very important to implement in the teaching process. This is to solve learning problems through specific interventions. For example, it can be seen in the study of Osman et, al. (2020) which stated that the use of teaching aids helps the teaching process to be more effective. This study used a qualitative method of case study, focusing on the use of teaching aids by emphasizing on the 4C, 1V elements, namely communication, critical, creative and collaborative and added value elements. The result showed that Arabic teachers use various teaching aids in teaching *nahu* (grammar) to help students understand the learning topics easily.

There are also studies that highlight creativity in the use of ICT for learning and facilitating purposes as found in the study by Mamat and Razak (2023), Zainuri (2019), and Osman, et al. (2020). In general, their study found that teachers should be creative to use ICT for learning and facilitating in the classroom. Creativity will help teachers to solve learning problems tactfully, and provide free time to Islamic teachers after successfully completing classroom learning and learning tasks. This statement is supported in the study of Abdullah, Zhaffar and Tamuri (2020). In their study they found that the application of ICT during the teaching and learning process among Islamic Education teachers could help them perform teaching tasks efficiently and strategically. This is because they are not only able to provide students with teaching input but also provide teaching output where all ideas and teaching concepts bring positive impact on the development of student teaching.

Thus, it can be concluded that the practice of creativity is an important element to be applied in the teaching process of the 21st century learning. This paper will further highlight the factors that trigger teacher's creativity in teaching.

Factors Affecting the Practice of Teachers' Creativities

Based on the literature review, there are several factors that contribute to the practice of teachers' creativity. Among of them are teachers' readiness, pedagogical mastery, curriculum mastery, thinking style, personality and motivational factors. These factors will be described in more detail by the researchers in the next section.

Teachers' Readiness

According to Nagaretnam and Mahmud (2022), the implementation of 21st century teaching and learning according to national education policy depends on teachers' readiness. Therefore, teachers play an important role in shaping and changing the teaching pattern by uncovering the potential of students, thus linking the knowledge gained in everyday life. Teachers need to be prepared both physically and mentally including the teaching materials that will determine the success of the teaching process. In addition, Moridan (2013) stated that teachers' readiness in terms of knowledge, attitudes and interests in using methods tailored to the needs of students is fundamental to create an effective teaching process.

The aspects of the methods, content, approaches, activities and the suitability of the materials used, are key to the effectiveness of the teacher's teaching process. In addition to the emphasis on knowledge, priority should be given on current student development in all aspects, namely cognitive, physical, emotional, social and others so that teachers can make proper preparation to align the content of the teaching in accordance with the learning syllabus and cognitive abilities of the student. Improved quality of teaching, energy and time processes can foster students' interest and interest in learning and their interest in coming to school through creative and appropriate materials selection. Therefore, it can be concluded that the level of readiness of a teacher especially Islamic Education teacher before beginning teaching and learning is essential to produce creative and quality teaching.

Mastery of Pedagogy

In order to face the challenges of the 21st century, teachers' mastery of pedagogical knowledge is essential and a key pillar to determine the success of the teaching process. This was also supported by Noor and Ramli (2018) where in their study they emphasized the need for teachers to equip themselves with pedagogical knowledge and subsequently apply it during the teaching process in the classroom. An effective teaching requires Islamic Education teachers to understand a variety of approaches to the talent, abilities, interests and developmental stages of students. This is because each student has different intelligence and different learning styles whether visual, auditory or kinaesthetic. Therefore, the different method in teaching is necessary so that students of diverse intelligence can achieve their learning objectives without being left behind. In addition, through the application of multiple intelligence theory, it is possible to contribute to the success of student learning in schools as well as students being more motivated to attend teaching and learning sessions. This shows that teachers are aware of the issue of individual differences and are fair to each student's needs.

Mastery of Curriculum

Curriculum mastery is seen as a very important aspect of the teaching and learning process as it reflects the teacher's understanding of the subject being taught and the teacher's understanding of concepts and facts in a more specific domain (Shaari and Yaakub, 2016). According to Othman et, al. (2022), Islamic Education teachers need to have a comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of the subject matter in which they are taught. This is because a teacher who has a deep understanding of a science will be more respected and trusted by his students. In addition, teachers who master the curriculum are more creative when teaching as the teacher is well versed in the field they teach (Tajuddin & Zulkifli, 2022) and know how to attract their students' interest in learning topics taught during classes. This is also supported by Omar (2020) in her study whereby she mentioned that the teacher's competence can be measured based on curriculum mastery. According to Hashim & Nor (2019), teachers need to be more creative and innovative in mastering the 21st century curriculum. The curriculum can be changed depending on the ability and potential of the student. Therefore, in order to increase the potential of students, adaptation of the method based on the choices made by the teacher should be made to achieve the teaching objective.

Thinking Style

According to Wahab and Saud (2021), in general, the style of creative thinking exists in each individual, but depends on how the individual optimize and maximize the potential and

ability. To be a creative person, the individual must focus on building his or her own style of thinking. A creative teacher has a different style of thinking than any other teacher. Creative teachers view the issues that arise during the teaching process as an opportunity for them to implement intervention programs or action studies (Mutia, et. al., 2018). They do not feel overwhelmed by this but understand that each student has different abilities and levels of intelligence. Therefore, changes to the teaching method should be made immediately to ensure the student's survival.

In addition, the teacher's thinking style should be at the forefront of the day and should be more open. According to Nagaretnam and Mahmud (2022), teachers today need to accept the fact that the teaching process is now more challenging as education policy are on constant change in order to meet the demand and standard of 21st century learning. Therefore, teachers should always be prepared to accept any changes in the education system in order for the country's education to continue. For example, teachers nowadays should be prepared to accept changes in teaching methods. According to Abdullah and Darusalam (2018), to ensure this is successful, teachers must be creative in implementing the transformation of the teaching process especially when developing a teaching plan for the targeted objectives to be achieved. In addition, teachers also need to apply the elements of creativity while teaching in the classroom so that the students can show interest in learning and make their potential more visible.

Personality

Personality generally refers to one's personality, character and legality, Rahman (2012) states that one's personality is unique and different from that of another individual's personality despite being in the same environment. A teacher with a creative personality can easily attract and focus students during the teaching and learning process. For example, teachers who have the ability to inject elements of carelessness into their teaching will make the classroom atmosphere more enjoyable and this will indirectly enhance the process of accepting knowledge while making one teacher a person effective educator. This is important because the teaching and learning process can become a tiring and frustrating experience when the delivery method by the teacher is unattractive and bland. Teachers who are able to bring students to study in cheerful environment will be the student's favourite figure and idol. According to Salleh (2018), majority of students love teachers who can joke. They will look forward to the teacher's arrival and focus fully on what is being said. Aziz et, al. (2021) stated that naturally, every human being loves a cheerful person and atmosphere, and hates being threatened or isolated. In short, it is understandable that a creative teacher's personality can create an effective and engaging learning environment for students.

Motivation

Motivation is defined as an internal state that stimulates, directs and maintains behaviour (4th Edition, Dictionary). Mariam and Zanariah (2015) stated that motivation is a catalyst in one's heart to act in order to reach the matrix. This means an individual's desire to move toward success in life. In short, motivation is the process of generating energy by the need directed at achieving a goal. These motivational factors also contribute to the practice of teachers' creativity. Intrinsic motivational factors (motivation and interest) and extrinsic (external factors) are able to inspire teachers to improve their practice of vocational professionalism and their level of creativity. In addition, the roles of the State Department of Education, District Education Officer and school administrators are seen as important and significant in

encouraging teachers to apply creative teaching (Abdullah, et al., 2020). Involvement of teachers in innovation competitions organized by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia (KPM) or external agencies has been helpful in enhancing teachers' motivation to continue being creative and innovative in teaching sessions. According to Abdullah, et al. (2020), grants, awards, promotions, besides research and publishing facilities may be considered by superiors as rewards or 'rewards' that can be given to teachers who are struggling to create the teaching innovations.

Conclusions

Overall, it can be concluded that creativity is one of the main skills needed in developing the country, especially in a complex social environment nowadays. Teachers play an important role in applying the elements of creativity in teaching as well as preparing the new millennium generation with all the knowledge and skills so that they can overcome the challenges ahead. 21st century learning is one of the initiatives introduced in helping teachers to apply the element of creativity. Various interesting activities are emphasized in the 21st century to create an exciting and fun learning environment. Everyone should understand well and take serious of the creativity aspect especially teachers in the implementation of the teaching session. This is because creativity can influence the quality of one's work or daily activities. Through this concept paper, there are many factors that can motivate a teacher to become a creative individual. All of these factors should be taken into consideration whether the teachers in urban or rural schools depend on their suitability and ability. Therefore, teachers need to constantly update their knowledge of pedagogy as well as enhance the practice of teachers' professionalism through involvement in courses, workshops and PLCs (Professional Learning Community) specifically related to the practice of creativity. It is important that teachers are always 'up to date' about the best teaching policies and approaches. With the desire and awareness of teachers about the importance of renewing their knowledge, it is certain that Malaysia is able to produce world-class human capital.

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