Enhancing Animation Studies in Creative Technology Education Through an Entrepreneurship Approach: The UMK Experience

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Abstract: As a new paradigm in Malaysia and in order to develop the Creative Economy, the government of Malaysia has started a range of initiatives and provided numerous incentives for animation studies. Therefore, under the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia, the government has approved the establishment of Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) in 2006 as the 19th public university in Malaysia. One of the programmes offeredis a Bachelor's degree in Creative Technology. The uniqueness of animation studies offered at UMK is the combination of practical animation production skills and theoretical knowledge in emerging technologies and heritage elements, using an entrepreneurship approach including a practical training and capability to create new markets. This paper will discuss the experience of the Universiti Malaysia Kelantan in enhancing animation studies in creative technology education through an entrepreneurship approach to contribute to the Creative Industry and Creative Economy development in Malaysia.

Introduction

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) was established as the 19th public university in Malaysia in 2006. Among the many programs offered at the UMK a bachelor's degree in Creative Technology is considered a new area of studies that is unique in approach. The combination of many multi-discipline courses offered in the programme is believed to produce graduates with skills in design and added value of entrepreneurial attributes.

Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) is three year and seven months old as of March 2011. Despite being new, UMK took a bold step in introducing a program increative technology with the emphasis on design and entrepreneurial skill. It is under the Faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage. The programme offers four electives namely, Product Design, Textile and Fashion, Multimedia and Visual Communication. Within these electives, animation studies are offered under the Multimedia elective. The broad based courses are offered ranging from heritage studies, design basic, multi-design discipline and several courses in entrepreneurial and enterprising knowledge and skills.

The faculty's tag line "sustaining heritage and championing creative technology" has turned heads around by utilizing creative technology and heritage studies as an impetus in creative industries. The method used in teaching students focus more on the understanding and appreciation of theories as well as equipping them with practical knowledge and skills, hence the nomenclature of experiential learning and problem based learning is propagated in the UMK.

The focus of this paper will be on approaches taken by the university running an academic program in creative technology with particular reference to multimedia elective. The structure of courses offered, methods of teaching, support courses and problem related to teaching and learning of animation studies in a newly established university is discussed in this paper.

The Model.

Attempts to produce graduates with entrepreneur attributes have been going on since 1997 in most public universities in Malaysia. Two to three credits are allocated for the entrepreneur courses and activities in most

degree programs. Students in free enterprise(SIFE), entrepreneur week,symposium, seminar, bussiness plan competition are among others that have been used for the purpose.However the result is not encouraging. This is due to the objective of entrepreneurial education is not clearly stated. Tracer studies conducted by the Malaysia Ministry of Higher Education in the year 2009indicated that not more than four percent of graduates involved in enterprise activities. (Dahlan, 2009).

Students Centered Learning(SCL) approach to teaching is adopted in teaching and learning. Therefore Problem Oriented Based Learning (PBOL) and Outcome-based Learning (OBL) in entrepreneurial education has been widely used by the UMK.Producing design-based graduates with entrepreneurial attributes is the issue in question.

Teaching design-based together with entrepreneurial courses in the faculty of creative technology and heritage is considered a model developed specifically for the UMK. The UMK's Entrepreneurship Ecosystem is developed as an infrastructure to supportall programmes in the university. Diagram 1 below shows Mapping of the Ecosystem.
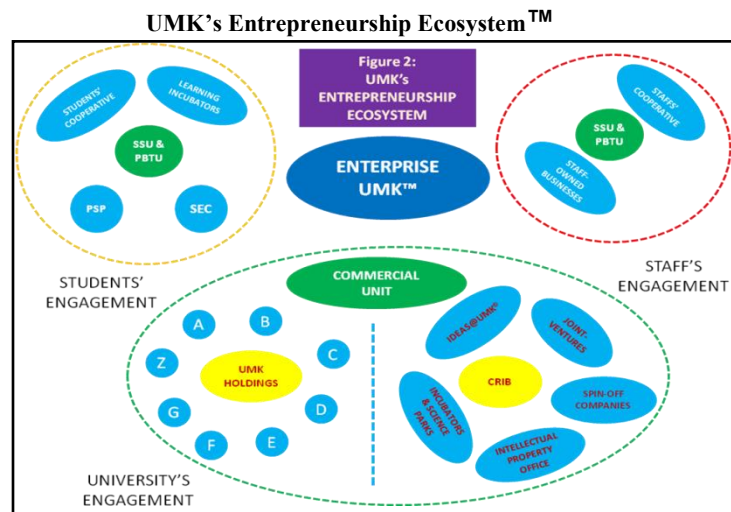

UMK's Entrepreneurship Ecosystem™

Diagram 1:Source : Mohamed Dahlan Ibrahim, (2009). Entrepreneurship And Enterprise Education Model : Experience From University Malaysia Kelantan

The graduates from the faculty of Creative Technology and Heritage are expected to acquire entrepreneurial and design skills besides intellectual capabilities. Therefore the curriculum is designed as such.There are three area of emphasis which cantered on design skills and technology, heritage values and entrepreneurial skills. Supporting programmes outside formal lecture rooms are in place for entrepreneurial education. Active participationin cultural performances are encouraged amongst students. The diagram illustrated below shows the percentage distribution allocated to courses with different emphasis.
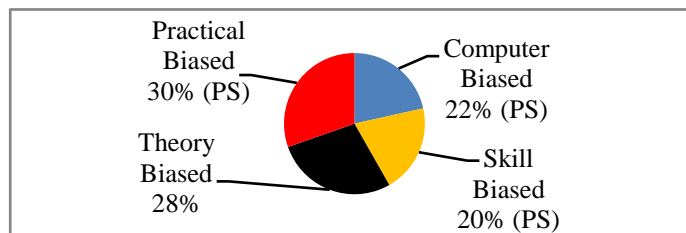

Diagram 2:The Pie Chart indicates the distribution of courses with diffrent emphasis adopted by the design-based faculty.

The holistic approach, integrating the four domain in a project-based assignment is a common practice to achieve the learning outcome of the programme. These include the entrepreneur attributes as expected by the university. Diagram 3 below shows expected graduate attributes
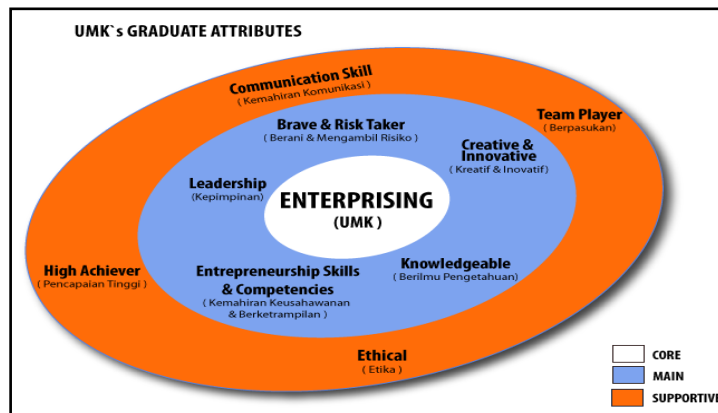

Diagram 3: UMK graduate Attributes

The structure of the programme is designed in such a manner that all students of the faculty have to take the common courses in the first three semesters. This is to ensure that students are exposed to fundamental lessons that are pertinent to acquire creative skills. Besides, the heritage contents included in the fundamental lessons enhance the creative ability of the students. Diagram 4 illustrates below the formation of the curriculum distributed over the four year period.
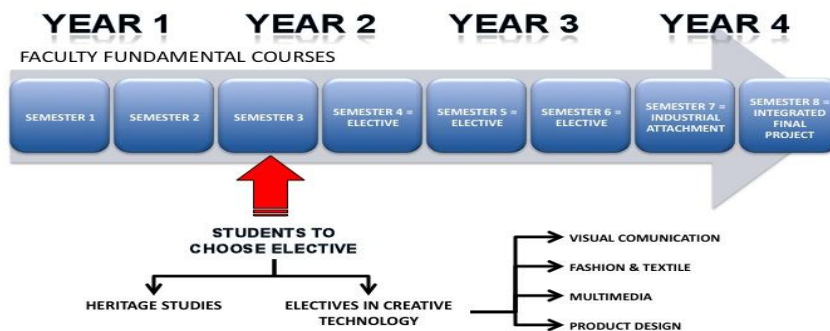

Diagram 4: Curriculum distribution over the four year studies.

The overall programme structure is divided into four main clusters namely:

a. Faculty courses and industrial attachment.
   The faculty courses are those fundamental arts and design syllabus that is compulsory for the students to complete before advancing into respective thrust electives. Courses taken include Drawing, Studio Fundamentals, Visual Presentation Techniques, Traditional Arts and Design, Malay Culture and Civilization, Multimedia and Web Technology, Introduction to Sociology and Anthropology and Arts and Computer. Industrial attachment is compulsory for all students before graduating.

b. Programme elective courses
   There are four electives offered for the degree in Creative Technology. These include Elective in Multimedia, Visual Communication, Textile and Fashion, and Product.

c.   University courses

University courses are compulsory subjects that must be registered by all students of UMK. The courses include English Language, Co-Curriculum, Ethnic Relations, Critical and Creative Thinking, and Islamic and Asia Civilization.

d.   Entrepreneurship elective courses

Entrepreneurship elective courses refer to entrepreneurship and business subjects offered by the Faculty of Entrepreneurship and Business. Students should complete four subjects such as Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship, Management, Marketing and Entrepreneurship Behaviour.

In the animation studies under the Multimedia programme, students are expected to optimize lessons learned in heritage and entrepreneurship studies for the final year project. They have to demonstrate with evidence in the project the application of both studies. The university also provides support for students to enter competitions as an encouragement to increase industry-university participation and collaboration. Diagram 5 below illustrates the mapping of the learning process. As for the final year projects students are expected to work closely with industry partners so as to familiarise with the real world.
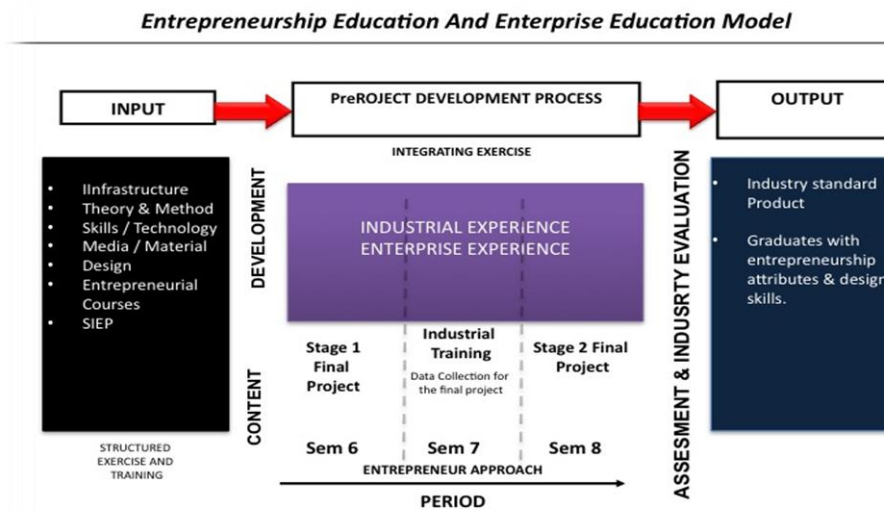

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Diagram 5: Entrepreneurship Education and Enterprise Education UMK Model.

The final year students doing animation in Multimedia elective have shown remarkable understanding of integrating between heritage and creative technology. The use of computer in creating ideas and presentation is well utilized.

Findings.

The university is in the fourth year of operation and is expectingit'sfirst batch of graduates in September 2011. Therefore the outcome of the academic model used can only be evaluated fully after one year of graduation. However through observation and comparison with other institutions and profiling studies there is marked evidence that students have obtained certain level of entrepreneurship quality when they were in their third year of studies. The confidence level also improved among students involved actively in the cultural activities. There is also evidence that students have marked improvement in optimizing computer as a means to achieve creative solutions in design exercises and communication skills. However only through the final projects the expected learning outcome of animation studies can be evaluated. This can only happen in the next six months.

Conclusions.

Diversified courses offered from the liberal studies, art and design, communication skills, and entrepreneurialskills show traces of evidence of students increase in creative ability together with entrepreneurial attributes. The UMK model shows promises for the future development of animation studies through entrepreneurship approach.

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