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Practice based research in craft education: approaches to research work book

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Abstract

Knowledge and understanding towards the variety of cultures that exist among Malaysians are important assets for trainee teachers especially for subjects that involve craft and culture such as courses that are being offered by the Bachelor of Education (Hons.) Art and Design Education, Faculty of Education, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia (UiTM): ADE630 (Craft Design and Function) and ADE680 (Craft, Design and Society). The skill of recognising different cultures that exist in Malaysia should be exposed to the trainee teachers once they are being enrolled into the program. For trainee teachers from UiTM, the exposure towards culture diversity is being conducted by using two approaches. The first approach is via the production of the Research Work Book (RWB) while the second approach is via the production of artwork in the form of traditional and contemporary craft by using the studio based research method. This paper will discuss on the approaches used and challenges towards the implementation of the mentioned approaches.

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Keywords: Art and Design Education, Faculty of Education UiTM, Research Work Book, Studio Based Research;

1. Introduction

(This paper discusses on the experience of the implementation of cultural understanding that is conducted by the B.Ed (Hons.) Art and Design Education, Faculty of Education, UiTM. The implementation is made via the teaching and learning activity for the craft art subject. Various programs and activities have been conducted through the subject to give chances for the trainee teachers to learn and to experience the importance of understanding various cultures for their future teaching. It is admitted that the ability to understand various cultures is not an easy task and may most of the time, test the patience and emotion of teachers. Therefore, this

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effort is conducted by the faculty in hoping that the future teachers may become the mediator to expose the cultures in Malaysia. Hence, future graduates are also expected not to have only abilities in using good pedagogical techniques in teaching but also to attract students to be actively involved in the process of learning in class.

2. Craft Education and the Implementation of the National Culture

The National Education Philosophy is a main frame in structuring and arranging the national education development. The national curriculum is arranged to meet the aims of national education philosophy in which it also aims to produce individuals with good personality, balance and harmony in terms of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical development. For the Visual Arts Education subject, the curriculum stresses on making the students to be able to recognise the culture via visual arts activities (Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia, 2000, 2002; 2002). In line with the Art and Design Education Program by the Faculty of Education, UiTM, the trainee teachers are being exposed to spread the understanding in their future teaching. According to Mat Desa Mat Rodzi(2002), there are four aspects in developing and enhancing the students' knowledge. The aspects are known as the culture aspect, the quality of life aspect, the cognitive aspect, and also the health aspect. Other than the implementation of the Discipline Based Art Education (DBAE), the culture aspect has also become an aspect in which the students develop their interest towards the various cultures and arts that exist in every culture that they learnt. The understanding of culture via visual art activities can increase the level of appreciation towards various culture, one which may affect the thinking style and also the artworks style produced by students (Isa, 2008). The exposure regarding the culture also inspires artworks production in which artworks produced tend to be more meaningful and this reflects the effectiveness of learning via visual arts activities.

3. Author Artwork

A research via Practice Based research is very synonym for the researcher in the visual arts field especially those related with the study of craft. The studio based research method requires the process of the research to begin from the finding of the research material, sketching, development of idea, basic drawing and up to the final artwork whether in form of painting, statue, new dimensional craft and printing, or art installation. For this to happen, artwork producers, artists, painters, sculptors, and art educators should prepare their own Research Work Book for the purpose of documentation. Among the examples that can be given related with the Research Work Book based on the Practice Based Research are the authors' experience and observation during the educational trip to Melbourne, Australia in 2011. The higher level institution in Australia offers Masters of Arts by coursework or research, which implies the usage of Research Work Book. The Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University (RMIT), Monash University and La Trobe University di Melbourne for instance, are among universities that apply the technique for any levels of education such as diploma, bachelor degree, or masters in visual arts. From the perspective of the practice based research, craft education is not exempted in producing the artworks, in which it has to start by the production of Research work book. Fig.1. shows Practice Base Research Framework (Ramlan Abdullah, 2011).

“According to Linda Candy (2004), in her essay ‘Practice Based Research: A guide’, research that takes the nature of practice as its central focus is called ‘practice-based’ research. This particular research is carried out by practitioners, such as artist, designers, curators, writers, musicians, teachers and others, often, but not necessarily, within doctoral research programmes.”

(Ramlan Abdullah, 2010)

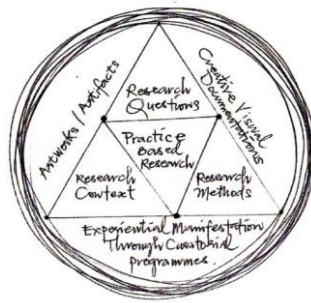


Fig.1. Practice Base Research Framework (Ramlan Abdullah, 2011)

As trainee teachers, the introduction of the concept of studio based research in which the main criteria is the preparation of Research Work Book, is a form of paradigm shift towards the curriculum renewal and the coursework of syllabus for the National Visual Arts Education. The clear explanation by Ramlan Abdullah (2010) and also the definite definition about the practice based research by Candy (2004) are important in the production of the Research Work Book. Apart from that, artists should also put into consideration, their own local or international references. The purpose is to ensure that the trainee teachers have their own style examples and certain streams to inspire them in creating new artworks. In producing new artworks, trainee teachers must also make art criticism towards the artist in which they have made inferences to either in their research work book or in the craft artworks.

“...asserts that the role of art and design in relation to research practices encapsulates three modes of research which is research into art and design, research through art and design and research for art and design.”

(Frayling, 1993)

According to Jalaini Abu Hassan (2011), the usage of the word ‘I’ or ‘the Artist’ is important as it tells their experience in producing the artworks in the Research Work Book. This includes the artists’ experience and observation towards the experimentation of their own artworks. This is known as *artist statement* which is being used in universities that offer masters and PhD in visual arts field such Pratt University, USA and Wollongong University, Australia. This leads to the explanation of the artist’s own preference such as the book written by Syed Ahmad Jamal which is ‘*Rupa dan Jiwa*’. From the view of practical studio research, visual is a form of documentation of the art pieces through Research Work Book and this soul is a value of intuition and emotions of the artist that is related to the inner issues that is raised by the artwork. According to Linda Candy (2004) in her essay ‘Practice Based Research: A Guide’, research that took the nature of practice as its central focus was called ‘practice-based’ research. This particular research was carried out by practitioners, such as artists, designers, curators, writers, musicians, teachers and others, often, but not necessarily, within doctoral research programmes. (Ramlan Abdullah, 2010)

4. Research Work Book (RWB) approach in Craft Education

The implementation of the visual arts research which is employed by the Art and Design Education Program in the Faculty of Education UiTM refers to the Research Work Book to prepare students with idea exploration and visual research. For that purpose, a research guideline is introduced to ease research. Amongst the important aspects which are considered in producing the Research Work Book (RWB) are aesthetic values, national culture, sociological aspects, individuality, solutions to problems on creativity, and critical and innovative thinking skills. Trainee teachers will have to produce the RWB for all practical studio and computer related subjects. This RWB

will become an important document in supporting the production of studio or computer related tasks especially for production of final art projects.

In short, RWB is a form of documentation on the processes of visual arts research that will contain information in the forms of visual sketches and writing. This document is a record of expression of ideas which is supported through readings and observations as well as analysis on photographic images, sketches, drawings, video recordings, websites etc. Grauer, Kit and Anami Naths (1998) define RWB as:

“...similar to, yet different from a sketchbook. It is kept as a type of journal, the content showing visual thinking, narration, reflection, goal setting in a variety of forms: drawing, sketches, collages, photographs, graphics, and personally meaningful symbols. Words invariably become an important part of the RWB, as describe (narrate) and support depictions, becomes graphic devices, aids reflection on personal theme and metaphor”

(Grauer, Kit & Anami Naths 1998, p. 14)

There are a number of structures available in producing RWB. For the Art and Design Education Program in the Faculty of Education UiTM, the structure and format of the RWB are as follows:

- *Critical Reflection*
Designers/Artists do reflection and consideration pertaining to sketches.
- *Art Criticism*
Designers/visual artist critique sketches to see the accuracy and the application of art and design elements.
- *Comment Writing*
Communication in the form of comments or writings detailing important details.
- *Dialogue*
A form of interaction between the designer and the sketch to see the impact of the sketch.
- *Experimentation*
A form of research to see the ability and effects of experimentation on certain methods, techniques and items used on sketches or products.
- *Idea Exploration*
Inspiration of sketches from early ideas either in borrowed form, what is already available or something that is being innovated.
- *Growth of Idea*
The growth of idea is in the form of progressed sketches from Idea Exploration (*sketches, pre-sketches, comprehensive, pre-comprehensive, thumbnails, drawing, final drawing*). Research either in the form of new creations or modification of sketch. It is usually used in graphic design subjects and development of animation and multimedia.

The importance of artistic study through the production of RWB requires higher-thinking order skills because it involves intellectual force and sometimes inspiration through feel and emotions. Individuals who communicate visually in classrooms or outside of the classrooms will not be complete if they do not relate their studies in the context of culture and society. Besides that, style exploration through and art materials as well as experimentation of techniques is a compulsory content in RWB. The aim of the RWB is to encourage the research atmosphere which is individual findings which act as proof and documented items.

4.1 Basic Characteristics of RWB

- Usually A3 in size (297 x 420 mm)
- Minimum of 40 pages (bounded in landscape format)

- Is almost similar to sketch book and scrapbook or portfolio but it is more structured and needs to have certain content, format and chronological order.
- Creative writing and art criticism
- Characterised by the growth of ideas
- Experimentation on media and materials
- Elements exploration and artistic principles.

4.2 *Research Workbook and Future Learning*

Image development is a constant challenge for artist and teacher alike. The type of record keeping encourage by the Research Work Book is not only used by artists. History shows that great thinkers have been recording, documenting, and reflecting on their ideas using a variety of visual forms. One easily envisions Edison's light bulb sketches, Da Vinci's flying machine, and recently Stephen Hawking's space-time diagram. This record of image making is a record of thinking and step towards reflection and metacognition. Thinking about how we think moves us out of the world of reflex and allows us to look beyond the immediate situation. This is essential in a world that is in continuous change. As an art educator, the routine and unprompted use of RWB is what they should attempt to inculcate and expect out of their students. The lecturer's job, in the studio, is to guide their explorations by providing a variety of tools, methods, media, and the necessary time.

Examples of artist employing Research Workbook/Sketchbook are Pablo Picasso, John Singer, Lee KianSeng, Villard d'Harnoncourt, Frida Kahlo, Henry Moore, David Smith, George Back (watercolors) Ella Libermann-Siber (WWII confinement) and Dan Eldon (activism in Somalia, murdered at the age of 23). Besides that, well-known Malaysian contemporary artists such as Amron Omar, Jalaini Abu Hassan, Ramlan Abdullah, Yusof Ghani etc used RWB before producing their art work. Other than that, artists who are also educators who graduated from Maktab Ilmu Khas Cheras (MIKC), the late Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal and Prof Dr. Abdul Shukor Hashim too stress on the RWB concept in producing their art work and include this in the teaching and learning of the art subjects in the teaching institution. As a visual arts educator, the use of RWB is something that must be included in the everyday teaching and learning situations. The lecturers in studios should guide their students to explore and provide them the necessary and appropriate tools, media and techniques. (Syed Shaharuddin Syed Bakeri, 2005)

4.3 *Program Expectations*

Trainee teachers will get to:

- Produce artefacts in their RWB that demonstrate clearly in visual and written terms how personal research has led to an understanding of the topics (ideas) being investigated
- Produce artefacts in the use of creative thinking models to show how ideas are developed, and experimentation to find solutions to visual and technical problems
- Produce artefacts that show critical analysis about meaning and visual qualities of an art using an informed vocabulary
- Show awareness of cultural, historical, social aspects of themes from more than one perspective
- Produce artefacts on your reflections on their performance and processes of their own completed artworks within the context or art

4.4 *Content of RWB*

Research Work Book should contain the following:

- 1st page contains your personal data and course

- Personal reports of visits to museum, artist studio, atelier, and galleries.
- Photographs, photocopies and cut-outs are acceptable if they are accompanied by explanation and critical comments.
- Evidence of lecturer / students dialogue.
- Information / research recorded by writing, drawing, painting, collages etc. Sources should always be acknowledged.
- Workbooks are like visual journal, which should reflect a personal approach or style; they are neither sketchbook nor scrapbook. Workbook entries should be dated and kept in chronological order; they must be not constructed artificially after the work has been completed. Your workbook should not be edited (for example) by discarding weaker beginnings or false start), because this prevents the lecturer and the examiner from assessing your personal progress during the entire semester.

Almost all the subjects offered by the Visual Arts Education in the Faculty of Education UiTM are required to produce RWB. Table.1 List of all the subjects offered by the Visual Arts Education:

Table 1. List of all the subjects offered by the Visual Arts Education

MAJOR (INTER-STUDIO)	MINOR (DESIGN & NEW MEDIA)
The Child and Visual Art	Typography and Page Composition
Fundamentals of Drawing	Drawing and Illustration
Introduction to Art and Design	New Technologies and Artists' Tool
Art Education and Museum/Gallery	Interactive Multimedia
Art, Ideas and Inspiration	Educational Technologies for Art Education
3D Media-Sculptural Form	Craft Design and Society
Change and Innovation	Craft Design and Function
Art and Religion	Design Education Seminar
Images, Meanings and Techniques	Curriculum Project in New Media
International Visual Culture	
Art in Context	

5. Research Work Book in Craft Education

In the ADE630: Craft, Design and Function and ADE680: Craft, Design and Society are courses designed for basic crafts to understand the concept and design of traditional craft because it is related to the hardworking processes of the hands to come up with decorations of a surface and manipulation of various materials and tools. At the same time, trainee teachers will do research and will act as designers in the society. Designers will also be judged by society so that they are aware of the aspects of environmental design as faced by students in their everyday life through the RWB approach. In the ADE630: Craft, Design and Function syllabus, a trainee teacher will master a few traditional crafts such as:

- Handrawn Batik, Batik Pelangi, Batik Cop etc
- Lino Printing, Silkscreen Printing, Mono Print etc
- Weaving (*Anyaman, Tenunan*)
- *Tekat* Embroidery
- Bead Embroidery

While for ADE680: Craft, Design and Society, trainee teachers will be exposed to a few traditional crafts such as:

- Shadow Puppet (*WayangKulit*)
- *Wau* (Kite)
- Ceramic
- Craft Book
- Woodcarving

In producing RWB for craft subject, trainee teachers will need to do a research on all the topics available in the syllabus. Fig.2. (a) shows the structure that is necessary for the production of RWB. Figure 2(b) Shows example of Research Work Book (Nurliana Khalid, 2012).

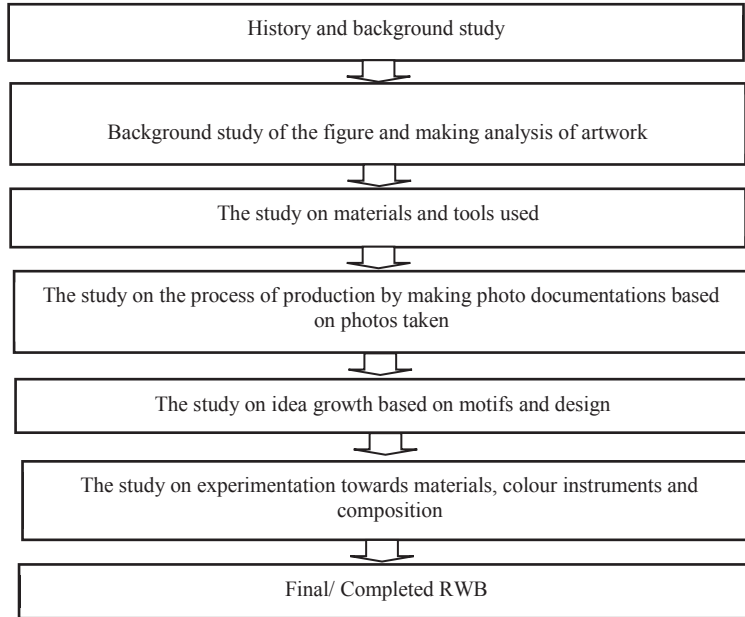


Fig.2(a) The structure that is necessary for the production of RWB.


Research Work Book (ADE630: Craft, Design & Society)	Criteria
	Topic and Introduction

Fig 2(b) Example of Research Work Book (Nurliana Khalid, 2012)

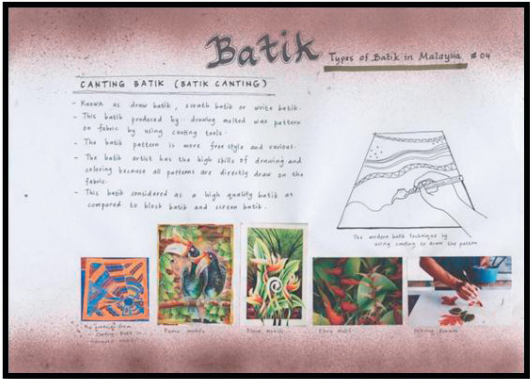

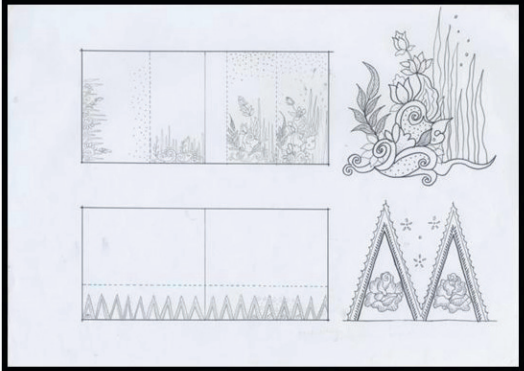
	<p>The study on the process of production by making photo documentations based on photos taken</p>
	<p>The study on the process of production by making photo documentations based on photos taken</p>
	<p>The study on idea growth based on motifs and design</p>

Fig.2(b) Example of Research Work Book (Nurliana Khalid, 2012)

6. Conclusion

This paperwork discusses the implementation of practice based research in the Art and Design Education in The Faculty of Education UiTM. Through Craft Education subject, early research through RWB is implemented so that the research will be more structured and organized. Besides that, the RWB approach will give a clearer exposure on local traditional crafts which are assets and legacy of Malaysia. Amongst others, it has dealt with the implementation of Visual Research, which forms as part of the curriculum of the Art and Design Education Programme in the Faculty of Education, UiTM. The Research Workbook is used as a tool to prepare and aid students in their visualization of ideas and visual research. It is for this purpose that the guideline in utilizing the RWB is introduced. These guidelines will also facilitate research as stipulated by the subject. Amongst the aspects which are given emphasis in the conception of the RWB are aesthetic values, national culture, sociology, personality as well as the solving of creativity issues through creative, innovative and critical thinking skills – all of which are compulsory elements in the formulation of the RWB. Trainee teachers are required to produce a RWB for all subjects which involve practical studio and computer lab work. The RWB serves as a vital document which supports the production of studio or computer lab based assignments, especially those which are final artworks or projects. In short, the RWB is a documentation tool which contains information in the form of visual sketch research and is used to record the visual research process.

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