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### PRESERVING CULTURE AND HERITAGE THROUGH NEW GENERATION METHODS: MASSIVE OPEN ONLINE COURSES (MOOC) AS THE EARLY PLATFORM

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#### ABSTRACT

The young generation nowadays are lack of knowledge in national culture and heritage. Things that are related to the national culture and heritage are often considered as outdated and irrelevant to today's youth generation who are exposed to advances of science and technology. Even if they have knowledge in them, they are limited to the performing arts or conventional fine arts like weaving. Therefore, this study attempted to expose deeper knowledge of national culture and heritage to students in line with the modern learning methods. Towards that process, online learning methods were applied so that the aspects of national culture and heritage can be disseminated efficiently to students in interesting and systematic manner. In this study, the online application that was used is Massive Open Online Courses (MOOC) for the subject of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage. The subject was offered in Semester 1 2016/2017 within the Malaysian Studies programme at Sultan Idris Education University. The MOOC exposed to students about online learning methods that have currently been conducted in the university. It is hoped that it can be a catalyst for a wider discussion on national culture and heritage with a state-of-the-art learning tools.

#### INTRODUCTION

Culture and national heritage are something that often draws the attention of local community either people from inside or outside the country. This is because national culture and heritage have their own uniqueness, though sometimes they are difficult to understand. To understand a national culture and heritage, one has to study it deeply, engage in the activity, or constantly read about it.

However, not all societies understand that cultural art and heritage are complex and must be defined by the demands of both explicit and implicit features. They are embodied in the meaning of culture that is broad and has a complex cultural meaning that contains knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, and other abilities as well as habits acquired by humans as members of their society (Taylor, 1871). As culture takes up so much space in terms of definition, thus its features in a cultural product should be understood so that they can be appreciated and meaningful to apply, especially to the multi-ethnic community in Malaysia. Therefore, national culture and heritage must be studied and applied to sustain in accordance with the country's civilisation. A civilisation that points towards eastern values is embedded in every cultural and artistic outcome as it is an adaptation of a community' life. Adaptation means that it embodies the philosophy and aesthetics of a specific community in every design, form, pattern, and motive of an art production.

Nowadays, it is difficult to see the value of beauty and knowledge and the execution of art and culture being observed, appreciated, and applied by the new society. If there is any, it is only a matter concerned with curriculum requirements<sup>1</sup> or due to space and job opportunities<sup>2</sup>. In fact, the knowledge of national culture and heritage is very low among the younger generation<sup>3</sup>. Matters relating to national culture and heritage are often seen as old and irrelevant to the younger generation who are exposed to the advances of science and technology, especially in today's world of gadgets. Even if there is such knowledge, it is merely based on the common knowledge that national culture and heritage is a form of performing arts on the stage or conventional visual arts, such as plaiting and weaving. As such, this study attempted to expose a broader knowledge of national culture and heritage in line with the modern and technological learning methods. Online learning styles were utilised to make knowledge more systematic, efficient, engaging, and effective.

The community needs to find new ways to pass on the knowledge, appreciation of the cultural arts and national heritage to the present generation. In this study, *Massive Open Online Courses* known as MOOC<sup>4</sup> was introduced to students to encourage them to seek for information thereby understanding,

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<sup>1</sup> As one of the courses in education at Sultan Idris Education University.

<sup>2</sup> Those who work as cultural artists or those who engage in cultural work (though not all but some due to their interests)

<sup>3</sup> Observations and assessments based on the experience of the researcher who taught the HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage course to 1st semester students at UPSI

<sup>4</sup> After this will only be written as MOOC

appreciating, knowing, and applying the country's cultural arts and heritage. It is hoped that MOOC will make the national cultural and heritage aspects more interesting and will be followed by students besides being a platform for students to exchange views and information and a platform to preserve their knowledge of national culture and heritage. MOOC is a new way of learning online that may serve as a site or a foundation for the community to maintain knowledge of national culture and heritage.

In this study, the online application that was be used is *Massive Open Online Courses* (MOOC) for the subject of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage, which was offered in the 1st Semester of the 2016/2017 session in the Malaysian Studies programme at Sultan Idris Education University. The use of MOOC did not only expose new students to UPSI on the online learning methods that were practised recently in this university, but it is also hoped that it will be a catalyst for a broader knowledge of our country's national culture and heritage, equipped with learning methods that are more effective and efficient to young students according to the time circulation.

#### **NEW WAY OF MOOC AS A PLATFORM FOR NEW GENERATION IN ONSERVING NATIONAL CULTURE AND HERITAGE: AN EARLY ANALYSIS**

Based on the analysis, 83% (n = 62) of the respondents agreed that online teaching and learning such as MOOC is important, especially to the particular subject HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage. By using the MOOC method, students were exposed visually to a culture, brought closer to the culture of the area, and the sharing of information was encouraged between students and lecturers. In addition, MOOC method is also very relevant to 21st century teaching as the learning sessions are more flexible in terms of place, time saving, information and communications technology (ICT), and teaching content without being tied to lectures only. In addition, students can increase their knowledge on the subject of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage. Nevertheless, there are pros and cons to consider. A majority of respondents also agreed that MOOC was used in the subject of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage, as it was easier for students to obtain knowledge, additional notes, and new information through videos, pictures, and articles provided on the website. In addition, students were able to learn new things, especially about multiculturalism and create more interactive learning as compared to traditional learning. Therefore, MOOC created effective communication that was both one-way and two-way. In addition, this method has given a quick exposure to lecturers and students on technology and virtual learning. Through this MOOC method, the cost of course materials was reduced and the students' burden was reduced.

The results of the interviews also found that most or more than half of the interviewees agreed that MOOC had facilitated them to find information about culture and art while helping them to complete other tasks related to

culture and art heritage. These data can be obtained through articles, videos, or pictures uploaded by other friends within the MOOC. Therefore, they agreed if the course is continued to be taught by incorporating MOOC elements as an effective method in teaching and learning process. The rest disagreed by arguing that MOOC encourage students to be lazy in reading and finding book-based materials. All three of the interviewees agreed that books are still the most established material to help students in accomplishing tasks assigned by lecturers. Meanwhile, many others found that it was difficult to navigate MOOC due to weak internet connection at the residential college at times.

As a result of the survey, 12% ( $n = 9$ ) disagreed that the utilisation of MOOC in the subject of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage could benefit students. They believed that online learning is not appropriate, as students and lecturers do not meet face to face, thus making students communicate less and understanding a topic becomes difficult. Therefore, they believed that teaching and learning traditionally is more flexible and easy to understand. In addition, the online method (MOOC) restricts more effective interactions between students and lecturers when in fact certain subjects require practice rather than mere theory. The remaining 5% ( $n = 4$ ) of the respondents were unconvinced that MOOC is important to students, especially for the subject of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage.

Based on the survey results, MOOC was successful in preserving national culture and heritage among students through online teaching and learning. Therefore, based on the survey results, 63% ( $n = 46$ ) agreed on the MOOC method of preserving national culture and heritage. This is because the learners can access to this learning method regardless of time and place. In addition, it is an additional tool for students to master the subject, especially their own culture and heritage. In addition, respondents felt that the MOOC method could be more effective in facilitating knowledge and experiences exchange if there are no WiFi problems.

The effectiveness of MOOC method in preserving national culture and heritage among students can be achieved through videos as well as pictures and comprehensive explanations besides enabling students to interact directly with the lecturers through the MOOC method. At the same time, students can learn more about the country's heritage and even deepen their understanding through the opinion space provided on the website. It is hoped that students will create their own aesthetic and cultural values as well as strengthen their bond with lecturers.

Since the MOOC was introduced, students have found it very effective in preserving national culture and heritage whereby students can upload notes before class begins and share ideas with friends of diverse cultures and heritage.

However, 26% ( $n = 19$ ) of the respondents disagreed that the MOOC method could be successful in preserving national culture and heritage through online teaching and learning. This is because the method successfully provided

information about the national culture and heritage, but it was not able to provide direct examples of why a legacy has been forgotten. Furthermore, MOOC was seen as abstract and can be taught arbitrarily without requiring sufficient knowledge. This means that practical methods are needed to reinforce the theory of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage subject. In addition, MOOC method was not able to preserve the national culture and heritage due to the lack of interaction between students and lecturers. The information provided using the MOOC method was unclear and difficult to explain online.

The MOOC method was not able to fully preserve the national culture and heritage, but was effective in certain situations. This means that students should not only focus on the MOOC method, but they should also refer to their lecturers face-to-face. Meanwhile, 11% ( $n = 8$ ) of the respondents were unsure as they have never used the application.

Based on the above survey results, 85% ( $n = 72$ ) of the respondents agreed that MOOC serves as a medium for preserving national culture and heritage through online teaching and learning. This can be proven through the content of this application that is interactive, accessible, and time-saving. In addition, the MOOC method can also be used as an alternative outside the lecture hall. In preserving national culture and heritage among students, the MOOC method helps as a foundation for students before beginning traditional teaching and learning so that students do not rely solely on lecturers. Furthermore, the materials used such as videos, pictures, and related files can attract students. The role of MOOC method could be more effective if the relation between lecturers and student is strengthened. In addition, MOOC's role is to preserve the national culture and heritage through the facilities provided so that students can understand it easily, and thus benefit from it more effectively.

About 7% ( $n = 6$ ) of the respondents disagreed about the role of MOOC as a medium of preserving national culture and heritage among students. This is because students were not exposed to practical methods or exercises, thus making it difficult for students to understand. Besides that, the sources available online are inaccurate as compared to written sources (book). Books are accurate and easy to understand, thus the authenticity of a culture and heritage can be maintained. In addition, constraints in terms of internet access and other facilities can sometimes hinder the effectiveness of MOOC. Meanwhile, 8% ( $n = 7$ ) of the respondents claimed that MOOC did not serve as a medium for preserving national culture and heritage.

## OVERALL ANALYSIS

From the data collection and analysis gained from the survey questionnaire and interviews as well as observations and participation, it was found that MOOC generally had a positive impact on students taking the HNS 3023 course. Most of the students pointed out that MOOC is a very effective

and efficient method of obtaining data and information related to cultural and artistic heritage. At the same time, it helps students to learn, discover, and appreciate something related to cultural and artistic heritage. Through interviews too, most of the students acknowledged that their perception of cultural arts heritage is changing. If all this time they thought that arts and culture only occur on the stage, they have now realised that arts and culture is a very large and extensive field of esoteric knowledge after undertaking this course, especially with the help of teaching and learning methods like MOOC.

Moreover, through all the research methods used, it was found that students were aware that the teaching and learning methods used at the university were different from school because they were exposed to knowledge that was not taught at school. For example, the E-Learning method was rarely practised in schools; however, it was a compulsory to use and master it for gaining knowledge in the university in order to keep up with others.

MOOC was also found to lead students through high impact learning processes. Students realised that MOOC is an effective way of gaining knowledge, although it is actually a medium to communicate easily with others and exchange ideas easily. Some of the students interviewed claimed that they felt shy to give their opinions and were unable to hear their peers' opinions during the traditional learning process. However, when they were in the virtual learning platform, communicating through MOOC, they were able to communicate easily without feeling disinclined and shy. This occurred because some of the students were reluctant towards giving their opinions and had an introverted attitude in the classroom. Therefore, with MOOC, they are free to express themselves and exchange their thoughts without having to talk directly.

However, there are pros and cons in using MOOC as one of the teaching and learning methods. Some of the students interviewed said that MOOC or other new methods at the "fingertips" encourage students to be lazy to read and seek for knowledge through printed materials such as books and journals in order to help them in doing their assignments. In fact, some consider the MOOC to be less effective because according to them, some students only knew how to upload pictures, videos, or other materials, but they did not read first and were not interested in reading other materials uploaded by their peers.

Besides that, sometimes the issue of internet coverage was also used by students as an excuse to refuse learning through MOOC. Students from the 3rd semester of the 2015/2016 session who had never used MOOC, considered MOOC to be very new and difficult to use as there was no initial exposure to them. As such, MOOC was a relatively difficult method for them besides having to deal with poor internet coverage that caused most students of the semester to feel that the MOOC method is not required in teaching and learning process.

These aspects of cultural preservation and heritage are among the highlights of this study. However, in this study, all students agreed that MOOC

is capable of acting as an effective medium or platform for preserving national culture and heritage. As the methods used in the MOOC were different from the traditional teaching methods, thus the efforts to preserve national culture and heritage were quite successful with MOOC.

This is because with MOOC, students were able to discover, recognise and even see and hear things related to cultural and artistic heritage. With the help of videos, pictures, articles, and texts as well as many other materials uploaded by students and lecturers, MOOC in the view of students was a very effective medium for preserving national culture and heritage so that it is not forgotten by younger generation.

## CONCLUSION

Through this study, it is clear that the exposure given to students on the use of MOOC based on the case study of HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage subject at UPSI was insufficient. Although the use of MOOC was well established and experimented, however, broader and more accurate disclosures need to be made in order to use these methods in disseminating knowledge among students more effective and efficient.

Although MOOC users only consisted of samples taken from the HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage subjects and samples that did not use MOOC when taking the same course, the results of the survey indicated that many students did not know or have knowledge of this application before using it or hearing it from the lecturers. The MOOC not only served as a facilitator for students and lecturers in the context of this study, but was also considered as a platform for preserving national culture and heritage.

In this regard, it has been found that the use of electronic mediums such as MOOC as a teaching and learning method has its own advantages and disadvantages. The benefits are that it saves time and gives opportunity to educators and students to improve teaching and learning outcomes, create effective teaching and learning techniques, it is easily understood and more innovative and creative. In addition, the MOOC has no borders, no age restrictions, and reduces cost. In the case of the HNS 3023 National Culture and Heritage Course, time-saving was identified, as face-to-face class tutorials were replaced by online tutorials that required students to upload or go online according to the requirements of the course lecturer. In addition to saving time, the MOOC had also encouraged students to be more creative in highlighting issues in the course. MOOC was also capable of transforming the conventional learning styles into modern and high technological learning. However, computer literacy skills were crucial in ensuring that students and educators can use MOOC applications effectively and efficiently. Meanwhile, the acceptance of MOOC depends on the individual himself to assess based on the current culture and circumstances. This is because the MOOC application is a learning method that enhances students' ability to make their learning more effective.

Besides that, there were also practices in some Public Higher Learning Institutions that placed MOOC as a method that is incorporated into the concept of blended learning. Blended learning refers to methods that feature stereotypical or conventional collaboration as well as e-learning within the teaching and learning process. The effectiveness of blended learning has been widely seen as a more effective learning method than conventional methods and e-learning alone. However, it is better for this blended-learning or electronic learning to be managed by students themselves, as it opens up opportunities for students to be more creative and innovative as well as independent in their learning process in this challenging millennium.

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