

# Implementation of the Element of Scenography in the Creation of Creative Works of Higher Secondary Students through Theatre Production in Malaysia Arts School of Johor

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**Abstract.** The implementation of scenography in the creation of creative and artistic works are parallel to each other while also being an important element in theatre productions' theatrical processes. This is due to the combination of the element of visual creation and creative ideas in the form of abstract, realistic and experimental, following the concept and the theme of the staged works. Therefore, this research aims to look at the role of scenography in creating an impactful staged theatre production in Malaysia Arts School of Johor with focused teaching and learning strategies to encourage innovative and creative minds through exploration to create immense creative ideas. The results of this research feature the importance of scenography exploration through suitable approaches to ensure the understanding of the scenography processes amongst instructors and students. They receive early exposure about the knowledge of arts, the basic principles of creation, and the technical skills in a theatre production.

Keywords: scenography, creative works, theatre production

## 1. Introduction

The emphasis on building creative and innovative minds to fulfil the country's needs in the 21st century has been stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint. The implementation of creativity and innovation elements in the curriculum in Malaysia Arts Schools will prove Malaysia's transformation agenda and it is parallel to each other so that the process is implemented in teaching and learning. Scenography Learning in general is to build the creative ability of a student in creating creative works in scenography. Scenography is very closely related to visual arts which is the visual literacy which includes the ability of using visual languages to read and appreciate visual images. Scenography is one of the major components in a theatrical processes especially towards the creation of the combined ideas of the creators and the production members. The pattern of teaching and learning in this subject involves various creative methods to ensure the students are exposed to the forms outside of their experiences especially in the creation of arts and theatres practically.

Individual growth in the aspect of creative creations needs to be addressed accordingly since it is seen as an important aspect which is related to the students' cognitive development in learning scenography. Therefore, one important element that can be identified which influences the development of the creation of creative works is the aspect of the students' cognitive through visual. The creative thinking ability to solve problems is very needed for the students to gain better ideas. The aspect of creative cognitive is vital because it is seen as how an individual can think creatively using innovative methods in creating creative and amazing ideas to solve any problem in creation.

#### Objectives

The objectives of this research are to identify whether the element of scenography can be implemented in teaching and learning and the functions can create dynamic support system to the students in the process of cultivating individual potential and talent as a whole through theatre productions. Other than that, to determine the factors that influence the problems surrounding the teaching and learning of scenography in theatre productions in Malaysia Arts School of Johor.

#### Methodology

This research is conducted using qualitative method since the data collected will be in the form of artistic theatre productions and the teaching and learning of the element of the scenography curriculum among higher secondary students in Malaysia Arts School of Johor, consisting of interviews, document reviews, survey, observation, and field research. Using these methods, the data is collected in the forms of words, illustrations, photographs, magazines, books, field notes, and other related forms. Information collected in this research focuses on the data through planned processes.

#### **Scenography in Students' Creative Works through Theatre Productions in Malaysia Arts School of Johor.**

One of the aspects that is being considered by a scenography designer is the work itself such as the number of scenes, and the settings which include the place, time, and the history. From the aspect of creation such as the materials and medium used in creating and constructing the set, the need in sizes and quantities in any set creation and construction, the environment around the stage which will bring the aesthetic effects between the set and the props, the 'wow' effects, the floor plan of the stage, sound effects and music in any performance. All these elements of scenography and creation principles in

staging a theatre are important for a designer to attend to so that the ideas in scenography creation has the purpose of giving an impactful performance.

According to Kennedy (1996), the importance of scenography in the learning of theatre productions is considered the same level as texts. When dialogues create the art of speech and behaviour on the stage, scenography creates the visuals. The element of scenography shows that words coming from a text are not enough to explain the meaning perfectly. According to Pamela (2003), scenography creation in a performance production is the visual processing through texts which is conducted through set and costumes, including the lighting aspect created to support the actors and actresses through the projection of dialogue and movement in a performance. This process involves visual and influenced by the 'dramaturgi' of the piece. The 'dramaturgi' of a piece needs to be addressed very carefully by the director and the artistic designer in a production. These two important components should have common visual languages to produce a smooth stage performance.

Individual growth from the aspect of the creation of creative works needs to be addressed appropriately because it is seen as an important aspect which is related to the cognitive development of the students in learning scenography. Therefore, one vital element that can be identified as a contributing factor to the growth of the students' creation of creative works is from the aspect of the students' cognitive development through visualisation. According to Reid (2004), creative thinking skills to solve problems are very much needed by the students to gain better ideas. The aspect of creative cognitive is crucial as it shows how an individual can think creatively using innovative ways to create creative and brilliant ideas to solve the problems arising in creations.

Pantouvaki (2010) has stated that synthesising the element of scenography in the learning of theatre productions will give explicit information to the audience on the place and the time the events happen, therefore preparing specific drama background will touch on the historical and social contexts, if not, it will defy the artistic and aesthetic visions of the production team if the historical references have been replaced with recent references or technological approaches. A scenographer should think like a director, thus he or she must consider how his or her creations can be used and have dramatic values on stage. Scenography is not a decoration or static painting on the stage, but it needs to be dynamic, and has dramatic effects just like the actors and actresses on the stage (Kennedy, 1996).

Several literature reviews reveal the use of a few related theories to analyse the research that will be conducted. The transformation in the country's education system should prioritise integrated plans to develop the potential and talent of the students optimally. According to Gardner, H. (1983), individual potentials can be classified into eight (8) categories in the Theories of Multiple Intelligences. Gardner suggested that an individual is able to unleash his or her special abilities in one or a combination of these domains: verbal-linguistic, logic-mathematics, space-visual, kinaesthetic, music, interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, and nature. In other words, an individual can be assumed to have at least one potential or domain that can be developed further.

Debates on the element of scenography are usually on the use of semiotic theories or aesthetical theories to analyse the elements or meanings from visual images displayed. From the scenography aspect, symbols play an important role to see the chain of meaning about humans' backgrounds (Rohidi, 2000). The process of creating scenography is an initiative in delivering education, knowledge, offering space for discussions, and also to share experiences that can be a basic guidance in creating creative works in theatrical field in schools.

Through this research, from the theoretical analysis, researchers used Pierce's theories. According to Zoest, A. V. (1978) who quoted Pierce, there are three (3) categories with the focus in three (3) levels, which are Firstness, Secondness, and Thirdness. The process of scenography creation through cognitive, psychomotor, and effective products levels will entitle and ensure the end product fulfil the needs and wants in any quality performance production. The main process of scenography creation includes the strategies and contents such as the information, research, the formation and development of ideas, exploration, synthesis, production, and evaluation.

The art curriculum in Malaysia Arts School aims to build and develop students' potentials from the aspects of creativity and appreciation towards the art of theatres. This curriculum is a continuous program for the students who chose theatre as their major in Forms Four and Five. Its learning focuses on the practical skills of theatre and theatrical works. The students are involved in various theatrical activities such as scriptwriting, evaluating works, and staging a theatre. These experiences have the purpose of encouraging creative and critical thinking skills among students. The exploration of scenography's designs focus on building the creative and innovative thinking skills through exploration activities such as text research, visual research, space research, sound research, and special effects which are implemented to obtain various

information on how to physically and verbally express the ideas and concepts of scenography creation.

The exploration on text research is implemented to gain information such as society's backgrounds, time and era settings, social statuses and socio-culture, while visual research aims to gain information on the suitable necessary images based on the scenography ideas and concepts. The results of space research can be used to make arrangements on the actors' and actresses' movements as well as on the usage of set and props prior to the suitability of the stage. The research on the suitability of sound and special effects is conducted to prepare a list and collection of suitable sounds and special effects to be used. Other than that, multiple media in exploration activities such as digital, photography, videos, magazines, and newspapers also helped in obtaining information and ideas in producing scenography in the creation of students' creative works through theatre productions.

In general, scenography exploration activities aims to produce scenography creations for theatrical productions. The activities are based on the practical activities conducted using hands-on approaches. There are various approaches that can be used to create teaching frameworks to achieve the learning standards set by the ministry. The approaches consist of teachers' strategies to achieve their planned teaching objectives. Inquiry-based learning is a student-centred teaching and learning method which involves asking questions and curiosity in which the students need to find answers through observations, hypotheses, collecting data, measurement, translations, and deducing conclusions. Inquiries is also a process in creative innovations which encourage problem identifications, exploration, and discovery to obtain information and in-depth understanding on the tasks given to them.

In the context of creative scenography works through theatrical productions, students need to be exposed to more produced scenography creations from various sources. In the learning processes, multiple questions such as "What are the suitable designs for the set and props to show the location is in the living room?" and "What are the suitable sound effects to be used to show it is night time?" may rise. The students will find the answers to their questions through discussions with the teacher and also through finding information from various sources.

### Conclusion

Scenography is very closely related to visual arts, and reading visual languages is the most important instrument in producing visuals on stage.

Through the visualisation processes, a scenographer needs the ability to analyse other visuals, for example photography, reality and observation experiences (Pamela, 2009). The process of translating visuals from any piece requires complex imagination and creativity, since the visual existence on stage needs to be aligned with the storyline and the characterisations of the characters, and the most important issue, the visuals can be accepted logically and can be read not only by the audience but also the production team members themselves. The purpose of developing innovation and creativity among the students in Malaysia Arts School in teaching and learning scenography is to produce creative and innovative young artists in theatrical productions. This is due to the fact that creative and innovative individuals have the ability to produce quality ideas and creations, enabling the students in Malaysia Arts School to compete in international levels.

In constructing art curriculum, art discipline needs to be given the utmost priority where according to Chapman (1985), three things that must be instilled which are self-reaction and self-expression in arts, artistic heritage works, and the roles of arts within the society and its surroundings. Therefore, art discipline is considered as an affirmation in teaching and learning of art in schools which starts with the focus on the students' expression and thus, developing their art skills in other fields (Chapman, 1985).

According to Schwab (1981), the structure of the discipline is very important to educators and education. Meanwhile, Efland (1983) stated that when a knowledge has a good structure and correct methods of conducting it, it becomes a solid discipline. Multi-Discipline means various other knowledge disciplines as the support to the main discipline. Discipline & Multi-Discipline curriculum will combine four basic disciplines (aesthetical, art products, art criticisms, the history of arts and performing arts) with several other visual art disciplines in science and technology, multimedia and other fields.

The students on whom the disciplines will be taught needs to be put into consideration by exposing them to the branches of psychology such as cognitive psychology, psychoanalytic, behavioristic, and other psychological references that are related to humans' behavioral patterns such as imitation. Psychoanalytic theory is more to expressive behavioral pattern of an artist and a designer.

The environment is also an important aspect in the development of the students' intellect and behavior. Multiracial citizens in Malaysia and its surroundings play a major role in education. An excellent curriculum relies on a flourishing environment in every aspect possible. For instance, K-economy

concept is very dependent to a conducive environment with the latest and modern accommodations and infrastructures. To sum up, to ensure the increase in the growth of aspiring artists, the transformation on the country's education system needs to recognize the variety and uniqueness of the talents and potential within each and every student in Malaysia. As stated by Gardner (1983), cultivating individual potential and talent holistically is the responsibilities rested upon all authorities to achieve the aspiration of becoming a flourishing country which is in need of competitive, high potential, and brimming with talent individuals.

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