

Aug 22nd, 9:00 AM

Simon Says Syndrome in Art and Design Education

Muhizam Mustafa

School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Mumtaz Begum Aboo Backer

School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia

A. S. Hardy Shafii

School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Azila Zainal

School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dl.designresearchsociety.org/learnxdesign>



Part of the [Art and Design Commons](#)

Citation

Mustafa, M., Backer, M.B., Shafii, A.H., and Zainal, A. (2013) Simon Says Syndrome in Art and Design Education, in Reitan, J.B., Lloyd, P., Bohemia, E., Nielsen, L.M., Digranes, I., & Lutnæs, E. (eds.), *DRS // Cumulus: Design Learning for Tomorrow*, 14-17 May, Oslo, Norway. <https://doi.org/10.21606/learnxdesign.2013.101>

This Research Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Conference Proceedings at DRS Digital Library. It has been accepted for inclusion in Learn X Design Conferences by an authorized administrator of DRS Digital Library. For more information, please contact dl@designresearchsociety.org.

Simon Says Syndrome in Art and Design Education

Muhizam MUSTAFA*, Mumtaz Begum Aboo BACKER, A.S. Hardy SHAFII, Azila ZAINAL

School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia

Abstract: *Learning is an important ‘task-conscious process’ that help changes in behaviour (or potential for change). In other words, learning is seen as an outcome - the ‘end product’ of some process. The ‘Simon Says Syndrome’ term was coined based on observation where teachers provide little learning for students other than the experience of doing. This resulted in students being apt at following instructions rather than exploring the process of learning. This paper also argues that ‘Simon Says Syndrome’ may be defined or reflected from the set of conventional practices and systems for teaching (or learning) especially within the art and design context; which ways and methods of teaching for the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills are through the application of sequencing and memorising of instruction as a skill. The art and design field need students to acquire problem solving skills, which tends to require a much higher level of perfection to represent and solve problems. The danger of “Simon says Syndrome” also lies in the learnability and acquisition of principles in development of ideas. This is evidence in Malaysian classroom, where it is common for the art and design teachers to offer students suggestions or solutions by memorising and imitating techniques and examples of artwork from the books. This paper discusses on issues concerning teaching and learning experiences in art and design in Malaysia.*

Keywords: *Art and Design, Teaching and learning experiences, learning activities, behaviour.*

* Corresponding author: Universiti Sains Malaysia | Malaysia | e-mail: sam.muhizam@gmail.com

Introduction: The learning process

‘Reflection: the foundation of purposeful learning’

Learning is an important ‘task-conscious process’ that help changes in behaviour (or potential for change). Many theorists have, been less concerned with changes in obvious behaviour but are more concerned with changes in the ways in which people ‘understand, or experience, or conceptualise the world around them’ (Ramsden 1992). In other words, learning is seen as an outcome - the ‘end product’ of some process. According to Carl Rogers (1993):

I want to talk about learning. But not the lifeless, sterile, futile, quickly forgotten stuff that is crammed in to the mind of the poor helpless individual tied into his seat by ironclad bonds of conformity! I am talking about LEARNING - the insatiable curiosity that drives the adolescent boy to absorb everything he can see or hear or read... I am talking about the student who says, "I am discovering, drawing in from the outside, and making that which is drawn in a real part of me."... Now I'm grasping and comprehending what I need and what I want to know!
Carl Rogers (1993)

What Carl Rogers implies is that learning is no longer just about gaining knowledge but also focuses on the ability of comprehending what is learnt through experience and making informed decisions. This evidently will ensure the depth or nature of the changes hence ensured a successful learning process. Säljö (1979), Ramsden (1992) divided learning into five different categories:

1. Learning as a quantitative increase in knowledge. Learning is acquiring information or ‘knowing a lot’.
2. Learning as memorising. Learning is storing information that can be reproduced.
3. Learning as acquiring facts, skills, and methods that can be retained and used as necessary.
4. Learning as making sense or abstracting meaning. Learning involves relating parts of the subject matter to each other and to the real world.
5. Learning as interpreting and understanding reality in a different way. Learning involves comprehending the world by reinterpreting knowledge

Ramsden (1992)

Ramsden argues that learning as quantitative increase in knowledge, as memorising and acquiring facts, skills and methods as ‘a less complex view of learning’. In this fact, learning is something external to the learner. This is the conventional classroom learning and teaching commonly practiced in Southeast Asia generally. Acquiring knowledge has become a bit like shopping. People go out and ‘purchase’ knowledge - it becomes their possession. The last two learning processes look to the ‘internal’ aspect of learning. Learning on these two final levels is seen as something that one do in order to understand the real application. Hence the latter learning processes are important and should be a crucial element especially in art and design education.

Based upon researchers’ personal experience in teaching and observing teachers in Malaysia, many problems assigned by art and design teachers provide little learning for

students other than the experience of doing. Students were often 'spoon-fed' with instructions, notes and often rely on those instructions rather than take full responsibility of their own learning. Rather than take chances with their art and design work, students tend to be wary of what they have to offer, and are less explorative with their ideas. Therefore, it is a common scenario to see students waiting for further instructions before moving to the next stage of their design. As a result, 'spoon feeding' becomes an unhealthy practice and alarming phenomenon. Hence students are apt at doing rather than learning.

The 'Simon says Syndrome' is the extension of the 'spoon-feeding' learning. As teachers, what was observed countless times, students are afraid to take initiatives with their own ideas or explore limitless possibilities at the chance of being 'punished' for thinking outside the box. 'Follow whatever the teacher says' is the heart of the 'Simon says Syndrome'. Limiting the inquisitive minds to explore myriads of learning outcomes, would further guarantee more timid and less resourceful learners in the near future.

It is never easy to find the 'perfect' method in teaching especially in the field of art and design. Some academics argue that the field of art and design itself has become much more complex as theories of knowledge have changed. This paper attempts to give a concise yet clear clarification of the term art and design in relation to education. Within this framework, the notion of 'Simon says syndrome', its contributing factors and consequences are discussed.

According to Smith (2001) 'the term art (and design) education is generically describes any form (often institutional) educational activity that involves art (and design), and it is used to describe the specific study of that activity'. Hence in this instance, the definition of art and design education is generally accepted as a field of study rather than a discipline, and because art and design is so varied, no clear or consistent single method or approach to its inherent methodology. As a result many different and external disciplines have been applied to this field and these have influenced in turn both general and specialised art and design education pedagogy.

Secondly as political, social, economic and technology progresses so does the way design evolved. The history of art and design education reflects not only a relationship to general education but also influences from the social sciences, advances in technologies and the conceptual and visual changes which occur within the field of art and design practice. Its boundaries and complexities have been and still are infinitely variable even elusive, and changes and shifts whether to do with politics and social issues, fashion and trends or connected to highly specific cultures and sub-cultures are an essential part of the content of art and design education. Indeed change itself is an intrinsic and unavoidable component.

Finally the quest to understand self and to examine the nature of experience, representation, identity and subjectivity has always formed the basis of cultural exploration. The need to justify explain and relate to these issues has taken place through philosophy, sociology and historical study, disciplines which have provided discrete methodologies which have brought new emphases and understanding. The more complex society and art and design forms become, the more relevance of these disciplines shifts and it is continual shifting, sometimes of necessity and at other times the dictate of fashionable trends that form the impetus for teaching and learning.

In this sense, the old school style of teaching using chalk and board, textbook and the conventional classroom learning is also no longer viable. What is needed is the reflection of how art and design is highly inter-related with fashion and trends, social

and political issues are developing hence demolishing the anxiety of focus on the relationship of theory to reflective practice. It is crucial as academician and teachers we look at these developments. It gives clues and possible directions when approaching the best possible method in parting knowledge, specific study activity and encouraging critical creative thinking in art and design education.

It is time to stop for a moment and think about the past learning and teaching experiences. Most educators are already well established in this reflective process. Educators in the field of art and design have been trained to analyse what they do in the course of their everyday work so that they can find the best ways to make a difference for the learners they teach. Qualified teacher should be well established in this reflective culture, should understand that in order to continue to improve and learn more about effective teaching, they need to make time and space to think carefully about what they are doing in their sessions and for the organisation as a whole. By reflecting and constructively analysing in this way educators will find new and better ways of teaching and develop professional competence across an increasingly broader range of knowledge, skills and expertise. The focus must be on factors that influence learning rather than on what is presumed to be an interesting problem. Effective teaching entails identifying what students gain by doing problems, and using content, process and criteria directed towards learning.

‘Simon Says Syndrome’: Understanding the Symptoms

Historical Contribution

Before the advent of British colonial period (1786-1956), the education system in Malaya was principally about the teaching of Islamic studies (*Fardhu Ain*) since the era of Malacca sultanate and with the spread of Islam in the 15th century. It was centred within teachers' private home where students learn to recite the Quran in the houses of their teachers commonly known as *Ulama*. Due to increasing number of students, the teaching was conducted at mosques and *madrasah* and finally placed within religious institutions called '*Pondok*'¹. From the '*Pondok*', a style of disseminating knowledge was transformed to a formal school based learning system under the British which is still applicable today which was based on Barnes Report 1951². According to Stedman (1986), Malaysian education system is patterned after the British education system.

At the end of the British colonialism era, several group of educated Malays including Abdul Razak then the Education Minister, headed a special committee to revamp the pro-colonial education system which represent the new national interests. This report known as the Razak's Report (1956) act as a catalyst in establishing the Education Ordinance 1957. This ordinance recommends the promotion of cultural (inclusive of art), social, economic and political development accepted by the nation as a whole. Stedman (1986) reported:

¹ At the religious institutions, there was no standard syllabus and the content and delivery were based on curriculum used in Al Haram Mosque in Mecca.

² L.J. Barnes (Director of Social Training from Oxford University) was appointed to investigate and study the type of education system suitable to be implemented in Malaya. The report is to highlight the establishment of primary education which is not racist and using Malay and English language as a medium of instruction.

'After independence in 1957, Malaysia began building a nation with which all the ethnic groups could identify. Parliament's enactment (1957) of the Education Ordinance, which made Bahasa Malaysia a common national language to be used in a unified system that would preserve the language and the culture of the different ethnic group in the country, was seen as a key in building national unity' Stedman (1986: 4-5)

Since Razak's report, the educational curriculum has undergone several changes to suit the aspiration of the Malaysians. This speeds up the process of national integration and unity. The Rahman Talib's report was set up to review the education policy in 1960 which became a basis to establish the Education Act 1961. The act provides the legal basis for enabling national language to be a compulsory subject in primary and secondary school and all training institutions. However, the Act provides little framework on art education. The main objective of the education is to promote the cultural, social, economic and political development of the nation.

According to Shukor Hashim (1989), the art papers were not a compulsory subject to pass in order to be elevated to the next level. Art was merely an optional subject. Little effort has been made to change this direction or concept of art teaching (Zain, 1978, Hassan, 1978). In addition, parents and children viewed art subject as least important as compared to other compulsory subjects such as Bahasa Malaysia, English, Science and Mathematics. In this sense, the art education in the Malaysian context is believed not to contribute towards the development of cognitive skills and decision making skills. Art education during this time was not seen as a valuable asset in a newly independent country which looks into the development of science, technology and economy. When review of the curriculum was made later, art teaching was affected. Art education in secondary school has not changed much since 1978 which focuses on studio based activity. Students are basically taught the technical "know-how" of studio production, imitating of great works while eliminating the creative expressions of art. Consequently from 1985 until the present day, the curriculum of art in secondary school has not had a major review. The implementation of this policy has been one of central issue affecting in teaching and learning especially in the area of art and design in Malaysia.

The Malaysian art curriculum emphasises on 'techniques' rather than the expressive and creative aspects of learning which inevitably leads the schools producing skilled artistes rather than creative and innovative artists. There is no proper or specific pedagogy of art syllabus in Malaysia. Even the materials such as the art book available in the market does not give room for creative development or exploration as most of the drawing activities just encourage imitating other people's work. The art activities do not allow students to think and draw by themselves. As a matter of fact, none of the books discuss Malaysian art history, the work of the masters as well as indigenous works. This is a common conventional teaching and learning practices in acquisition of knowledge.

This paper argues that 'Simon says Syndrome' may be defined or reflected from the set of conventional practices and systems for teaching (or learning); which ways and methods of teaching for the acquisition of necessary knowledge and skills are through the application of sequencing and memorising of instruction as a skill. This is based on the order and organisation of learning activities which affects the way information is processed and retained (Glynn & DiVesta, 1977; Lorch & Lorch, 1985; Van Patten, Chao,

& Reigeluth, 1986). This is evidence in Malaysian classroom, where it is common for the art teacher to offer students suggestions or solutions by memorising and imitating techniques and examples of artwork from the books.

The 'Simon Says' teaching and learning is a suitable teaching or learning method for lower level of education, where the educational methods, strategies and techniques of teaching processes is designed for the purpose of imparting basic understanding and developing basic competencies through instructions. This does not mean instructional based learning do not hold any weight in the learning process. Instructional learning is still an important part of design pedagogy; used to elaborate the meaning and importance of design and instructional strategy but it should not be used as the main template for learning especially in art and design field. This is because instructional learning can be too restrictive and somewhat rigid to allow for exploration of unconventional idea generation. It is seen to be more suited for vocational education where the need for skills and fluency to follow instructional planning and objectives with practice; specific based knowledge and generic instructional skills is required.

The Art and Design field need students to acquire problem solving skills, which tends to require a much higher level of perfection to represent and solve problems. This will ensure that art and design students actively create their knowledge rather than passively listening to the teachers. It is about structuring learning situations cooperatively so that students work together to achieve shared goals. It is important for art and design to be taught to understand increasingly rich and varied design concepts and literature. These encourage and illustrate a growing effort to engage students more deeply and thoughtfully in subject-matter learning, between principles and practice, between the past and the present. Where students are asked to think through concepts and situations, rather than memorise and follow existing templates.

The danger of 'Simon says Syndrome' also lies in the learnability and acquisition of principles in development of ideas. It frequently argued that art teachers themselves are not qualified to teach the creative arts because there is no such policy to guarantee the teachers to have a prior intensive knowledge in the arts themselves. As aptly put by Hafshan A Razak (2010), most art teachers were creativity killers as they were not even familiar with art curriculum.

Learning and teaching is an on-going acquisition and transference of knowledge. Learning could also be thought of as 'a process by which behaviour changes as a result of experience' (Maples and Webster 1980 quoted in Merriam and Caffarella (1991). It is 'concrete, immediate and confined to a specific activity (Rogers 2003). How learning is being 'administered' is the key to a successful knowledge acquiring. The current design curriculum calls for emphasis on an active learning and teaching approach, and therefore demands educators to employ this teaching-learning style. However, it is acknowledged that little attempt is made to elaborate and to indicate how it can be translated into the teaching learning process at the classroom level. Thus, learner-centered pedagogy is most commonly understood for what it is not.

'Simon Says Syndrome': Parental Influence

This paper also argues that parenting styles and the upbringing of their children has great influence on the latter's success in school and their social life. Researchers and experts on parenting believe that learning starts from home. The early development of the child at home in five basic areas physically, emotionally, socially, intellectually and language competency is crucial and has great influence on his/her continuance from school to tertiary level. Parents play a very important role in the development,

exposure and creativity of their childrens' lives. Baumrind (1971) proposed three types of parenting styles; the authoritative parent, the authoritarian parent and the permissive parent, and each vary in its own characteristics.

The authoritative parent exerts high parental control along with warmth. The child's activities are directed into a rational and issue-oriented manner which encourages verbal 'give and take' between both parties. The child is allowed freedom of expression, to question and given reasons behind the parent's policies. The parent values both autonomous self-will, the rights of the child but at the same time maintains his/her status as the key advisor in any decision making.

The authoritarian parent on the other hand values obedience as a virtue, believes in inculcating such instrumental values as respect for authority, respect for work and the preservation of order and traditions. Unlike the authoritative parent, she/he does not encourage verbal 'give and take' but rather believes that the child should accept her word for what is right. Any questions being asked by the child will result in doubting the parent's capability in raising the child and showing disrespect. The decision making is absolutely the parents authority and never democratic. The authoritarian parent believe that love and support should not be shown openly as the authoritative parent as this can spoil the child and lead to disrespectful behaviour towards the parents, elders and the community. Love and support comes in the manner of respect, obedience and preservation.

The permissive parent allows the child to make decisions by himself, does not hold much or exert control over his child. He allows behaviour that is mostly disapproved by the other two parental groups. There are no house rules and the child is free to do as he/she likes. In this situation, both parent and child do not interfere in each other's business.

Asian parents mostly fall under the authoritarian group whereby traditions, cultural norms and religious values are instilled and passed down from one generation to the other. Asian parents and children have always been taught from the very beginning to respect their elders especially parents, teachers, care-givers and leaders. Questioning their intentions or decisions is considered the same as being disrespectful. Assumptions like the parents and teachers are always right are taken seriously by the community. As a result, children are not encouraged to discuss, question or express their thoughts freely. Studies undertaken by Baumrind (1991), Henderson & Reiss (1999) suggest that these children can be maladaptive as they are constantly under pressure to perform by demanding parents with very high expectations. On the contrary, results show that Asian children in America who are raised by authoritarian parent do well in school (Steinberg, Dornbusch & Brown: 1992).

There is no doubt that children in Malaysia are doing well in schools especially with students scoring straight A's in their government examinations. But the question is do these children continue to do well in tertiary level? For example, Universiti Sains Malaysia under the APEX (Accelerated Programme For Excellence) programme was given the mandate to pick and choose the crème of the crop to undertake the degree programmes. These crème of the crop do not question, do not argue, lack in curiosity and critical thinking. They wait for instructions, take the instructions as mandates and do very little thinking. Questions or situations that require spontaneous response are not handled or accepted well by these students but any questions that require facts from books or notes are well delivered. This clearly shows that these students from young have been taught to follow instructions, memorise facts but given little space for critical thoughts, unfortunately becoming the killers of creativity!

The arts just like the sciences need individuals who are curious, able to question, reason, hypothesise and synthesize. Both fields require creative and innovative individuals who are big risk takers and not afraid of failures. Children raised by authoritarian parents are small risk takers compared to children raised by authoritative and permissive parents. This could be explained due to the absence or lack of democratic environment in decision making. This also leads to these students being less open, afraid that they would be branded as disrespectful if voiced their thoughts and some are not so comfortable having discussions with teachers, lecturers as these were never much practised in schools or the home.

The one way traffic is much preferred by students as it makes their lives easier but found to be monotonous by lecturers. In order to have a well rounded, balanced and creative child, it is suggested that parents should adopt a more 'reflective-enhancing communication' parenting technique that encourages two way traffic in communication, helping children to understand their behaviour and make necessary changes, believing in the child as to develop child's self confidence. Studies show that 'reflective-enhancing communication' (Applegate et al., 1992) promotes the development of advanced behaviour and thought processes while encouraging reasoning, logic and problem-solving. This ultimately can help the child to develop his creativity and critical faculties. This type of home environment does provide a smooth transition from home to school and tertiary level.

'Simon Says Syndrome': Learning Spaces

Humans are creatures of habit and sometimes changing the habitat may lead to distraction. At the same time, it is important to also understand that learning spaces is a form of habitat which lends a healthy learning habit which needs constant improvement. This is because learning spaces have always had a profound impact on the learning capability. Learning spaces are defined locations, physical or virtual, where learning happens and should capture the purpose of learning. Andrew McDonald (2006) suggested that, ideally, learning space should be functional, adaptable, accessible, varied, interactive, conducive, environmentally suitable, safe and secure, efficient and suitable. According to Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment United Kingdom (CABE 2011), learning spaces relates to the curriculum and pedagogy plans where particular tasks in learning should be allocated to ensure that it will have a positive influence over the learning process. By providing dedicated yet fluid learning spaces, it could encourage a positive learning environment which allows for exploration, experimentation and reflection in learning. These positive learning spaces are characterised by:

1. **Personal spaces** - places students are allowed to work independently or quietly; good environments to aid concentration.
2. **Transition spaces** - these spaces for moving from one activity to another at different times; for easy movement, perhaps for meeting while walking or for moving past displays and other quick-stop locations.
3. **Play/relaxing spaces** - spaces to spend time between learning activities, where student might relax or socialise.
4. **Large group spaces** - spaces that can hold lots of people for an discussion or daily activity
5. **Small group spaces** - places to work with a small group aiming for the same goal, allowing access to resources and shared working.

6. **Specialist areas** - spaces which house specialist equipment useful for exploring different areas or interest or subjects.
7. **Display spaces** - places to find out what others are doing and see examples of other people's work.

Scheduled learning times in specific learning spaces with firm expectations of achievement within each period would improve results but this could also lead to a regimented routine. It is important to build flexibility into the learning programme and spaces or it can impede the learning process. In this study it is important to highlight that one of the contributing factors in 'Simon says Syndrome' is the lack of conducive classroom – a space for learning which allows for diverse pedagogy possibilities with different expectations and goals in learning.

The learning process is changing. Learners too are changing; there are many more learners who are aware of different learning possibilities, and students are more diverse –in terms of age, ability, perceptions and background. They have different expectations of learning and of learning spaces: some prefer the conventional learning spaces such as auditorium and classroom while others want to learn using network and mobile devices within a personal space. In these instances the learning spaces play a major role in shaping the learning experience and in-directly affecting learning attitude. According to Fraser (1994,1998a)

'a conducive classroom or learning spaces is a pivotal linchpin in promoting a favourable mood or atmosphere in a classroom to ensure an effective teaching and learning process to take place'.

Fraser (1994,1998a)

While Dorman (2002) supports the fact that 'student learn better in a positive classroom environment...one integral feature in creating conducive classroom environment is a good classroom organization and management'.

For this study, examples of physical arrangement of a classroom were taken from the learning spaces in Malaysian schools and universities which often arranged to be regimented (see **Figure 1**). This is typical of most public schools and universities where majority of the courses offered are not from the arts. Instructional learning and memorising sequence was the core of the learning style. Taking the template of these learning spaces and learning styles, either from the engineering or sciences faculty, some universities running the art and design based classroom adopted generic template for a learning space. Hence the idea of conformity come into place, setting the scene for 'Simon says Syndrome' learning and teaching activity.

The traditional physical arrangement of learning spaces can either promote or hinder the teacher's efforts and the quality of learning that takes place. Different seating arrangements are appropriate for different pedagogical styles and learning activities. A classroom that is not arranged to be functional could encourage student off-task behaviour. But on the other hand, a classroom that is arranged with rigid attributes would only encourage self timid and restrictive learning behaviour. In the art and design studies, it is crucial for the students to be able to probe, analyse, question and follow a 'fluid' learning and teaching style. This will encourage critical and creative learning. The art and design curricular exploration and reflective learning is encouraged, but the conditions of existing learning spaces dictate otherwise.

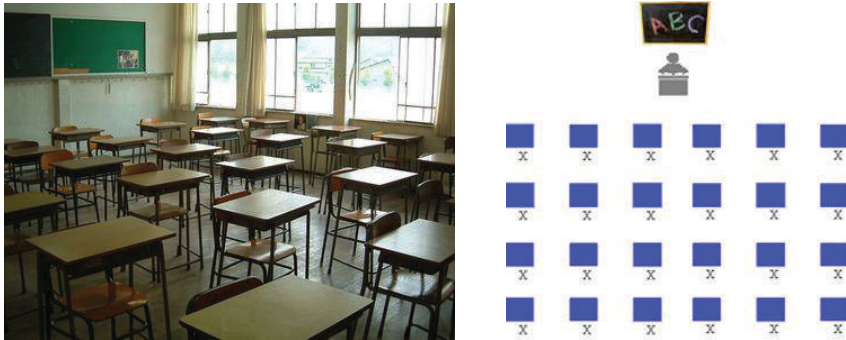


Figure 1. Malaysian typical traditional classroom layout

This study believes, the learning environment managed in such a regimented and restrictive manner shapes the values of the learning experiences. This in return becomes the catalyst towards a 'one way' learning attitude- which makes ways for the 'Simon says Syndrome' learning and teaching to take flight. When these students find themselves in the different learning environment, they fail to cope with the style of learning in higher learning institution which is more fluid and less regimented; allowing room for reflection and the need to re-adjust becomes a daunting task. As a result, these students revert back to their previous learning values - going back to the 'follow what the teacher says' experience.

This process then became a vicious circle -when the same student graduates, becomes a teacher and administers the same teaching and learning styles. At the end, it results in the 'Simon says Syndrome' to permeate deeper into the educational psyche. Hence it is important that educators understand this and look into the possibilities of breaking the cycle thus creating appropriate learning spaces which encourages positive learning style.

Impact and consequences of 'Simon Says Syndrome'

The impact of this syndrome is huge. The list is long. 'Simon says Syndrome' long term affect many corners of the education, economy and behaviour. This paper identifies some of the many impacts and consequences which are:

1. Student apt at following instructions
2. Control 'C', Control 'V' symptoms (Copy and Paste)
3. Memorising and imitation becomes a skill
4. Unable to think out of the box
5. Restrictive initiative
6. Lack of confidence
7. Docile and timid
8. Skilled but not innovative

The list above exemplifies some the common issues whereby if not tackled and dealt with, would jeopardise the learning behaviour. Ramsden (1992), '...learning should concerned with changes in the ways in which people 'understand, or

experience, or conceptualise the world around them'. Ramsden identifies that learning is not about following set instructions neither the ability to produce by imitating and memorising certain task without any consideration of the consequences. As a matter of fact, learning should allow for task-conscious processes that help changes in behaviour (or potential for change).

Although today's more conventional learning and teaching style works (to a certain extend) in producing skilled workers, it is important to see that within the creative industries, skills alone does not carry enough weight in ensuring a sustainable result. Even more alarming, with the advent of global changes in economy, environment and politics, learning through memorisation and following the dotted line will no longer be viable. This is because with the rapid changes in trends of living and expectations, a person must be able to be spontaneous, improvise and produce quick solutions based on reflection and critical understanding of certain concepts. It is quite clear that the 'Simon says Syndrome' will not allow for this!

Conclusion: Breaking the Cycle- Reflective Learning; A Possibility

From our preliminary observation of the art and design students in our university, it can be said that the 'simon says syndrome' is an issue plaguing the tertiary education process in Malaysia. It is not a myth but a serious reality which could result in lack lustre and timid learners. Worst still, in the era where Malaysia sees itself as a global challenger in the creative industries, the learning and teaching systems in art and design education is seen to take two steps back. What is important now is the ability to admit that the syndrome is real and it is a hindrance towards a better learning experience and goal. The symptoms are clear and by understanding the underlying issues which contributes towards the 'Simon says Syndrome', the next step is to look at potential learning styles that could help build better learners, cohesive learning and teaching pedagogies, and encourage critical learning within the art and design education in Malaysia.

Hence this study proposes further research to be undertaken in order to identify the factors that leads towards the recurrence of the syndrome in the Malaysian tertiary education process. The main research areas identified to be looked at are:

- a) the provisional factors from the provider's part such as the programme which includes syllabus, curriculum, lecturers, facilities and the vision and mission of the universities which directly or indirectly causes the simon says syndrome in Arts programmes in Malaysian public unversities.
- b) The pedagogy or methods used to teach the students
- c) The attributes of the students themselves such as their upbringing and background
- d) The weaknesses and the strengths of the existing learning model.

The research would then propose for a new learning model for arts and design based on the findings of the research. The new learning model will closely looks at the reflective learning as a remedy to break the 'Simon says Syndrome' effect and at the same time encourages learners to be both brave and critical in their thinking. Reflection

is an active process of witnessing one's own experience in order to take a closer look at it, sometimes to direct attention to it briefly, but often to explore it in greater depth. This can be done in the midst of an activity or as an activity in itself. The key to reflection is learning how to take perspective of one's own actions and experience - in other words, to examine that experience rather than just living it. By developing the ability to explore and be curious about our own experience and actions, we suddenly open up the possibilities of purposeful learning—derived not from books or experts, but from our work and our lives. This is the purpose of reflection: to allow the possibility of learning through experience, whether that is the experience of a meeting, a project, a disaster, a success, a relationship, or any other internal or external event, before, during or after it has occurred.

References

- Afshan A. Razak (2010) "The Pedagogy of teaching art"
[www.dawn.com/2010/the-pedagogy-of-teaching-art-2.html]
- Applegate, J.L Burke,J.A, Burluson, B.R Delia, J.G, Kline, S.L (1985) Reflection-Enhancing Parental Communication in I.E Sigel (Ed), *Parental Belief systems: The Psychological Consequences for Children*. Hillsdale, NJ Erlbaum pp.107-142)
- Applegate, J.L Burke,J.A, Burluson, B.R Delia, J.G, (1992) Reflection-Enhancing Parenting as an Antecedent to Children's Social Cognitive and Communication Development in I.E Sigel (Ed),A.V McGilli, *Parental Belief systems: The Psychological Consequences for Children* . Hillsdale, NJ Erlbaum pp.107-142)
- Azizi Jan (2011) " A Development of Education System in Malaysia Pre Independence"
[http://kheru2006.webs.com/a_development_of_education_system_in_malaysia_pre_independence.htm]
- Baumrind D, Black AE. (1967) Socialization Practices associated with Dimensions of Competence in preschool Boys and Girls: *Child Development* 38:291-327
- Baumrind D (1971) Current Patterns of Parental Authority, *Developmental psychology*, Vol. 4 (1,Pt 2) pg 1-103
- Baumrind D. (1991) The Influence of Parenting Style on Adolescent Competence & Substance Use, *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 11(1) pg 56-95
- Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment United Kingdom (CABE 2011) *Towards Creative Learning Spaces: Re-Thinking the Architecture of Post-Compulsory Education*, Routledge, New York 2011
- Dorman, JP, Adams, JE & Ferguson, JM (2002) 'Psychosocial Environment and Student Self-Handicapping in Secondary School Mathematics Classes: A Cross-National Study', *Educational Psychology*, 22(5), 499-511.
- Fraser B, Aldridge, J (1994) A Cross-cultural Study of Classroom Learning Environments in Australia and Taiwan *Learning Environments Research* 05-2000, Volume 3, Issue 2, pp 101-134
- Glynn, S.M. & DiVesta, F.J. (1977). *Outline and Hierarchical Organization for Study and Retrieval*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 69(1), 69-95.
- Hetherington EM, Henderson SH, Reiss D (1999) Adolescent Siblings in Step families: Family, Functioning and adolescent Adjustment, Monograph Soc.Res. Child Development, In Press
- John Dewey (1915) *The School and Society*, 2edition., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, pages 28-9.

- Lorch, R.F. Jr., & Lorch, E.P. (1985). *Topic Structure Representation and Text Recall*. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 77(2), 137-148.
- McDonald, Andrew (2006) *The qualities of good learning space* in 'The Ten Commandments revisited: the Qualities of Good Library Space' LIBER QUARTERLY, ISSN 1435-5205
- Merriam, S. and Caffarella (1991, 1998) *Learning in Adulthood. A Comprehensive Guide*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- M. Bakri Musa. (2003) An Education System Worthy of Malaysia, Strategic Information Research Development (SIRD), Petaling Jaya.
- Norhidayu Rosman (2012). "Development of Education System in Malaysia: Pre-Independence"
[<http://www.slideshare.net/NorhidayuRosman/development-of-education-system-in-malaysia-preindependence>]
- Rogers, A. (2003) *What is the Difference? A New Critique of Adult Learning and Teaching*, Leicester: NIACE.
- Rogers, C. and Freiberg, H. J. (1993) *Freedom to Learn* (3rd edn.), New York: Merrill.
- Ramsden, P. (1992) *Learning to Teach in Higher Education*, London: Routledge.
- Säljö, R. (1979) 'Learning in the Learner's Perspective. Some Common-Sense Conceptions', *Reports from the Institute of Education, University of Gothenburg*, 76.
- Stienberg, L Dornbusch, S.M, & Brown, B.B (1992) Ethnic Differences in Adolescent Achievement: An Ecological Perspective, *American Psychologist*, 47(6) pp.723-729
- Van Patten, J., Chao, C.I. & Reigeluth, C.M. (1986). A Review of Strategies for Sequencing and Synthesizing Instruction. *Review of Educational Research*, 56(4), 437-471.