



UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

**CULTIVATING CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS
THROUGH AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF
LITERARY TEXTS**

SAROJA DHANAPAL

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**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

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By

SAROJA DHANAPAL

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, University Putra Malaysia, in
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FEBRUARY 2008



Abstract of Thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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**SAROJA DHANAPAL
FEBRUARY 2008**

**Chairman : Associate Professor, Malachi Edwin Vethamani, PhD
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This research addressed the issue of critical and creative thinking skills (henceforth abbreviated to CCTS) in relation to Malaysian secondary school students. The aim of the study was to establish the current status of CCTS among Malaysian students and to prove the hypothesis that an integrated approach to literary text will enhance the level of CCTS among students. The integrated approach here refers to an approach which combines the reader response approach and stylistics analysis to the teaching of literary texts. The researcher adopted the combination of Benjamin Bloom's and Cogaff Taxonomy (a taxonomy derived by Dr Ghazali Mustapha) which is labeled as the CCT Taxonomy as a base for the study.

The study adopted a quantitative and qualitative research method whereby it incorporates an experiment conducted by way of a pre-test and post-test, an interview of teachers and classroom observation. The data for this study was collected through a survey conducted



in two Malaysian secondary schools, one in a rural area and the other in an urban area. The respondents consisted of Form 4 students.

In furtherance of the research, an analysis was done on the current methods adopted by the teachers in the schools with the purpose of investigating how far these methods were effective in cultivating CCTS among Malaysian students. The researcher also conducted some classes using the integrated approach to seek evidence that the method advocated (an integrated approach) is more effective for cultivating CCTS among students.

The research findings showed that an integrated method is more effective for the purpose of cultivating CCTS. The pre test and post test results of the groups were analysed using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA). The results obtained in the post test and its difference with the pre test results as well as the vast difference between the results obtained by the control group and experimental group showed that the method suggested which is an integrated approach to the teaching of literary texts cultivates critical and creative thinking skills far more effectively than the other methods used by the teachers currently. Findings from both the urban and rural schools were consistent.

The findings from this study could contribute to the improvement of pedagogical practices in the teaching and learning of literary texts. The approach can be used as a modal system by the Ministry of Education as it can aid teachers, teacher trainers and syllabus designers to develop a framework appropriate for cultivating CCTS through the

teaching of literary texts. This approach can be adopted both at schools as well as at tertiary levels. This approach will not only enhance CCTS among students, it will also cultivate an interest in reading literary texts and other reading materials. In the long run, if this approach is adopted, the objectives of our national leaders to cultivate citizens who have both the ability to think critically and creatively will be achieved.



Abstrak tesis yang di kemukakan kepada Senat University Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**MEMUPUK KEMAHIRAM BERFIKIR SECARA KRITIKAL DAN KREATIF
MELALUI KAEDAH INTEGRASI DALAM PENGAJARAN KARYA SASTERA**

Oleh

**SAROJA DHANAPAL
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Kajian ini merujuk kepada isu pemikiran kritikal dan kreatif di kalangan pelajar di sekolah menengah di Malaysia. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk mengkaji tahap pemikiran kritikal dan kreatif di kalangan pelajar sekolah serta memastikan hypothesis pengkaji bahawa, penggunaan system integrasi yang merangkumi teori “reader response” dan ‘stylistics’ untuk mengajar komponen sastera dalam matapelajaran Bahasa Inggeris akan dapat meningkatkan tahap pemikiran kritikal dan kreatif para pelajar. Bagi tujuan ini, satu taxanomi yang dinamakan Taxanomi CCT akan digunakan sebagai dasar kajian. Taxanomi ini adalah gabungan taxonomi Benjamin Bloom dan Cogaff (Taxonomi yang dihasilkan oleh Dr Ghazali Mustapha).

Data bagi kajian ini telah dikumpulkan melalui satu survey yang dijalankan di dua buah sekolah menengah, satu di bandar dan satu lagi di luar bandar. Para responden yang terlibat dalam kajian ini terdiri daripada pelajar-pelajar Tingkatan 4. Kajian ini



merangkumi satu eksperimen dengan kaedah “pre test” dan “post test”, temuduga dengan para guru dan pemerhatian pengajaran guru di bilik darjah.

Kajian ini mengamalkan metodologi “kualitatif dan kuantitatif”. Kaedah pengajaran yang diamalkan oleh para guru pada masa kini dikaji untuk mengetahui keberkesanan kaedah-kaedah tersebut dalam memupuk pemikiran secara kritikal dan kreatif di kalangan pelajar-pelajar di Malaysia. Pengkaji juga telah mengajar pelajar-pelajar di sebuah kelas di kedua-dua buah sekolah dengan menggunakan kaedah integrasi untuk membuktikan kaedah ini lebih efektif untuk memupuk pemikiran kritikal dan kreatif. Hasil kajian telah membuktikan metodologi integrasi lebih efektif bagi tujuan memupuk pemikiran kritikal dan kreatif.

Kajian statistik ANOVA dan ANCOVA telah dilakukan ke atas keputusan ‘pre-test’ dan ‘post-test’ kedua-dua kumpulan di kedua-dua sekolah. Hasil kajian di sekolah-sekolah tersebut membuktikan bahawa kaedah integrasi lebih efektif berbanding dengan kaedah yang diamalkan oleh para guru pada masa kini. Hasil kajian di kedua-dua sekolah adalah konsisten.

Hasil kajian ini akan menyumbang kepada perkembangan dalam bidang pedagogi. Dalam bidang pengajaran karya sastera, kaedah integrasi ini juga boleh dijadikan sebagai model oleh Kementerian Pendidikan memandangkan ia berupaya membantu guru-guru, pelatih guru-guru dan pengubal kurikulum bagi membentuk rangka yang sesuai untuk memupuk pemikiran kritikal dan kreatif melalui pengajaran karya sastera. Kaedah ini

boleh digunakan di sekolah-sekolah dan pusat pengajian tinggi. Kaedah ini bukan sahaja dapat meningkatkan tahap pemikiran kritikal dan kreatif di kalangan pelajar, malah boleh juga memupuk minat membaca hasil karya sastera dan bahan-bahan bacaan lain. Jika kaedah ini diamalkan, pengkaji yakin bahawa dalam jangka masa panjang objektif para pemimpin untuk melahirkan rakyat yang berkebolehan berfikir secara kritikal dan kreatif akan tercapai.



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I certify that an Examination Committee has met on 13th February 2008 to conduct the final examination of Saroja Dhanapal on her Doctor of Philosophy thesis entitled “Cultivating Critical and Creative Thinking Skills through an Integrated Approach to the Teaching of Literary Texts” in accordance with Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Act 1980 and Universiti Pertanian Malaysia (Higher Degree) Regulations 1981. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the thesis is based on my original work except for quotations and citations which have been duly acknowledged. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted for any other degree at UPM or other institutions.

SAROJA DHANAPAL

Date: 14 JULY 2008



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This research addresses the issue of critical and creative thinking skills (henceforth abbreviated to CCTS) in relation to Malaysian secondary school students. The topic of critical and creative thinking skills has been debated extensively over the years. Academicians all over the world have accepted that the central goal of education is to help students learn how to think more effectively. Although critical and creative thinking skills have been identified as important skills to be inculcated in students, the question on how this is being implemented and its success has yet to be analyzed. The aim of this study is to show how CCTS can be cultivated in the Malaysian secondary schools. The study also advocates an integrated approach, an approach which combines the reader response theory and stylistic analysis (the term will be explained in depth in Chapter Two) to the teaching of literary texts as a method of cultivating CCTS among Malaysian students.

Over the years there is evidence to show that CCTS skills are much needed in modern societies. Marzano (1988) claims that the success of any democratic system depends on the individual's ability to analyze problems and make thoughtful decisions. Cotton (1996) asserts that in the twentieth century, the ability to engage in careful, reflective thought has been viewed in various ways: as a fundamental characteristic of an educated person, as a requirement for responsible citizenship in a democratic society, and, more recently, as an employability skill for an increasingly wide range of jobs. In line with



this, the former Prime Minister of Malaysia, Mahathir Muhammad (1998) had stated that education should prepare children to cope with changes rather than become dependent on habits. He is of the opinion that education for the future should emphasize less on acquiring knowledge that is transient in nature and should focus more on developing critical and creative thinking minds. The former Minister's reminder can be said to have come at the right time.

The awareness as to the need to cultivate CCTS among students in Malaysia has been an issue of concern to many. Malachi Edwin (1992) stated that literature in English besides developing reading skills will also help develop students' critical thinking skills. He adds that these skills will in turn provide students opportunities to understand themselves and their fellow human beings better. In line with Malachi Edwin's view on the potentials of literature and its role in the cultivation of CCTS, the present research is aimed at using literature as the base through which CCTS can be promoted effectively. Literature in English has been chosen from the many subjects offered in the Malaysian curriculum for two reasons. Firstly, literature in English can be seen to cut across the various subjects in the curriculum as the contents of literary texts are so diverse that they incorporate social, political, scientific, technological, medical and all other areas of life. Secondly it is an undeniable fact that literature plays an important role in our present curriculum since it is now being taught to students from Form 1 to Form 5 as a component of the English Language syllabus. Ganakumaran S. (2007) gives further illustration as to why literature is a suitable subject for cultivating CCTS. He claims that "in literary reading we are engaged with the multitude of possibilities underlying the aspects we are reading [and that] this engagement leads us to the realm of explorations

of how the various elements of the texts – language, style and content – leads us through a wondrous journey of interpretations of the entire work”. There is no doubt that the very nature of the subject which requires analysis and interpretation in itself encourages critical and creative thinking.

Before delving into how studying literature can help cultivate CCTS among students, it is essential for us to understand a little as to the development of this subject in our curriculum. The role of literature in English in the Malaysian curriculum has gone through tremendous changes. The subject itself had been in existence since the colonization of Malaysia by the British. Ganakumaran S. (2003) has traced the history of the teaching of literature in Malaysia in a comprehensive manner. He states that the downturn in the teaching and learning of literature as a subject is crucially marked by the change in the medium of instruction in schools from English to Malay. He goes on to add that prior to the changes brought about by the Education Enactment Bill in 1971 which replaced English with the National Language, Bahasa Malaysia as a medium of instruction, the teaching of literature in English played a core part in the curriculum. With the amendments, literature was considered as a relic from the colonial past and was considered irrelevant in the age of science and technology (Fernando, 2004). Even with these turbulent changes, today, literature has reemerged in a stronger and renewed form.

In 1999, the Ministry of Education made the move to incorporate literature as part of the English Language syllabus (KPN/JPNS 2000). This resurgence of literature was the effect of development over the last decade seen in the economic boom together with factors related to globalization and the age of Internet (Ganakumaran S., 2003). Malachi



Edwin (2002) claims that there are many reasons for incorporating literary texts in our syllabus and that these reasons can be placed under two broad categories which is to educate and to entertain. He goes on to add that literature develops the imagination, gives various experiences, develops insight into human behaviour, presents the universality of experience besides enhancing language development. Ganakumaran S. (2002) claims that in Malaysia, the arguments regarding the benefits of using literary texts is seen for its merits of interactive and imaginative learning as well as the ability of literary texts in developing emotional and cultural maturity. The above views clearly indicate that literature is an effective subject through which critical and creative thinking skills can be enhanced.

The issue of cultivating CCTS among Malaysian students is not something new as there is focus on this in the school curriculum and the evidence is seen in the objectives of the curriculum and the teaching manuals provided by the Curriculum Development Centre for the teaching of the literary component. The English language syllabus for Form Four states clearly a number of objectives of the curriculum but the objective which is of relevance to the present study is Objective Number Three as quoted below:

‘listen to, view, read and respond to different texts, and express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively in spoken and written form’.

(Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, Ting IV. KPM, 2003)

The curriculum does indicate specific focus on critical and creative thinking skills and this is seen in the third objective. The phrase ‘express ideas, opinions, thoughts and feelings imaginatively and creatively’ indicates this. This clearly supports the view that the curriculum focuses on the ability of students to think imaginatively and creatively.

In analysing the syllabus specifications further, the focus on critical thinking is seen under the section titled ‘Education Emphases’. Under this heading, the syllabus indicates clearly that ‘critical and creative thinking skills are incorporated in the learning outcomes to enable learners to analyse information, make decisions, solve problems, and express themselves accurately and creatively in the target language’ (Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran Ting IV. KPM 2003)

The syllabus lists down the objectives for Form 4. For the purposes of this study, only the relevant objectives will be addressed. These objectives include the following:

- Interact with people and develop skills in forming and maintaining friendships by expressing care and concern and willingness to help; and creating a sense of togetherness;
- Give feedback on products and services and respond appropriately to feedback given;
- Obtain information from various sources including factual material and present the information clearly and accurately to others both orally and in writing;
- Read and respond to poems and stories;
- Have a positive outlook and act appropriately in social situations; and
- Show an awareness and appreciation of moral values and love towards the nation.

(Huraian Sukatan Pelajaran, Ting IV. KPM, 2003)