

The Qualitative Study of Career Sustainability of Creative Studies Graduates (Gen Z) in Malaysia

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To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i2/20083>

DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v14-i2/20083

Published Date: 26 February 2024

Abstract

The creative industry is known as an industry that benefits young generations and would provide a working ecosystem where the gig economy would dominate the work nature. Gig economy by nature is known for its temporary and flexible working environment that would attract younger generations to commit to it while and to make the situation worse is the influx of the Millennials generation that might not be employed due to the downturn of the economy especially in the aftermath of COVID-19. This study is a qualitative method of research that would conduct two (2) focus group discussions (FGD) with 2 different sets of generation which is the Millennials and generation Z with three (3) people per each session from the ranges of age of 21-40 years old. The objective of this study is to understand what would be the career sustainability of the students and graduates of creative studies once they enter the workforce. This study is expected to provide insights to the researchers that are mainly educators of what can be done to improvise the existing practice in the creative study ecosystem.

Keywords: Higher Education, Creative Industry, Career Sustainability, Creative Studies, Gen Z

Introduction

It is inevitable to understand the correlation between the quality of graduate produce and the sustainability of career establishment in any form of industry. This is because the

graduates who would later enter the workforce may eventually be part of the economic transaction ecosystem. Therefore, there were many speculations and arguments between academia, the creative industry and even the public of their concerns of the career stability of creative study graduates. Creativity for instance are energies that derive from inspirational energy that spreads onto young people, be it men or women, to venture into transformation of a society (UNIDO, 2013). Referring to the Chinese government where they have relentlessly promoted to maintain and sustainable development in the creative industry starting from the year 2006 (Yuet and Ma, 2018). According to Yuet and Ma (2018), with the sustaining support from the Chinese government towards developing the creative industries, there were more than three hundred thousand (300,000) arts and design graduates that would join the creative sector workforce each year.

The higher education sector in Malaysia provides many vocationally oriented degrees that are intended to provide a future workforce that involves careers as graphic designers, games programmers and not to mention brand managers, which are referred to as knowledge workers (Pettinger et al., 2016). Pettinger et al (2016) also added that private institutions in Malaysia offer a wide range of vocational degree programmes from nations such as the United Kingdom, United States and Australian Universities. It is significant for these countries to be validating creative courses offered here in Malaysia due to mentioned countries being pioneers in producing policies with the creative industry.

In Malaysia's scenario, the statistics shown by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM) by a report done in 2020 stated that there were 5.36 million graduates in 2020 which is noted to be having a significant increase of 4.4% from the year before in 2019 which was 5.13 million people. However, the statistics also indicated that 202,400 graduates were unemployed. Moving on to the 2022 statistics by DoSM, the number of graduates increased to 5.1% from the year 2021 with the number of 5.92 million graduates. The increasing number of graduates is partially good news for Malaysia that indicates Malaysia has the capacity to supply local workforce for the local consumption. Education are factors that indicate the capability for a nation to develop its economical values, and a nation may prosper if sufficient education and dedicated training of any field are provided to the citizens (DoSM Graduates Statistics, 2022).

With high competition from other sectors to penetrate into the creative industry, the students of creative studies future is unclear especially in the current economic downturn from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent Middle east & Russian war that took place in the years of 2022 and 2023. A lot of the graduates from the creative studies find it hard to sustain their career and would eventually leave the industry after some while, as the creative industry is deemed as an industry for the youth.

This study objective is to understand the possibility of the creative studies career sustainability among the graduates from the TVET are learning sector under the Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia. With a conducive and promising career perspective, creative studies graduates would be able to maintain a better prospect of job satisfaction that would be diverse from mental and physical well-being. The significance of the study is that this paper focuses on understanding the career sustainability factors among TVET creative studies under the Ministry of Higher Education. The qualitative data acquired were then analysed and the output discovered suggests a few enhancements that should be done in creative study

institutions especially in polytechnic. The study was conducted in qualitative method and interviewing six (6) informants which consists of three (3) students of Diploma of Video and Film and three (3) lecturers that teaches in the Department of Design and Visual Communication, *Politeknik Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin, Perlis*. This study is expected to provide insights of the current graduate employability of the creative studies students that enter the creative industry working in various positions especially in the aftermath of pandemic COVID-19.

Literature Review

Malaysia's attainment in the education ecosystem is relevantly noteworthy (Chang, Sirat and Dzulkifli, 2018). Even though pre-school education is not compulsory in Malaysia (www.malaysia.gov.my, 2023), it was reported that almost all of the children at the age of six (6) in Malaysia begin their pre-school education to equip themselves with the schooling system. To enable students to embark on their tertiary education journey, students must obtain their certificates from the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM). Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) is one of the most, if not the biggest examination for every Malaysian student. Historically, Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) was first introduced and commenced in 1964 and later on being fully implemented throughout Malaysia in 1987, and 60 years later is still being practiced today (www.moe.gov.my, 2023). The average age of sitting for this exam is seventeen (17) years old, but it could differ to individuals. A lot of working positions in Malaysia also require a minimum of Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) holders too.

Table 1

Figures of the registered and passed the Malaysian Certificate of Education (SPM) according to their gender from the years of 2017-2019 in public and private schools

Government, Government-Aided and Government-Aided Schools									
Year	2017			2018			2019		
Gender	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Registered candidates	179,492	200,479	379,971	169,951	187,292	357,243	169,500	184,624	354,124
Candidates present	175,733	198,488	374,221	166,009	185,279	351,288	165,382	182,600	347,982
Candidates passed the exam	139,033	179,852	318,885	132,760	170,583	303,343	133,324	168,186	301,510
Enrolled in private schools, institutions under other government agencies									
Year	2017			2018			2019		
Gender	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Registered candidates	21,661	20,181	41,842	21,370	20,287	41,657	22,471	20,751	43,222
Candidates present	20,942	19,845	40,787	20,494	19,859	40,353	21,363	20,153	41,616
Candidates passed the exam	16,892	17,709	34,601	16,935	18,072	35,007	17,833	18,430	36,263

Source: Malaysia Educational Statistics (2019)

The data above however were recorded before the years of the pandemic COVID-19 where the students who were to take the examination were to extend to the following year. The

year 2020 has recorded the highest achievers of straight A's students since the last five (5) years data despite the pandemic hurdles and tribulation of uncertainty (Astro Awani, 2021).

The Tertiary Education in Higher Education Sector & graduate employability (GE).

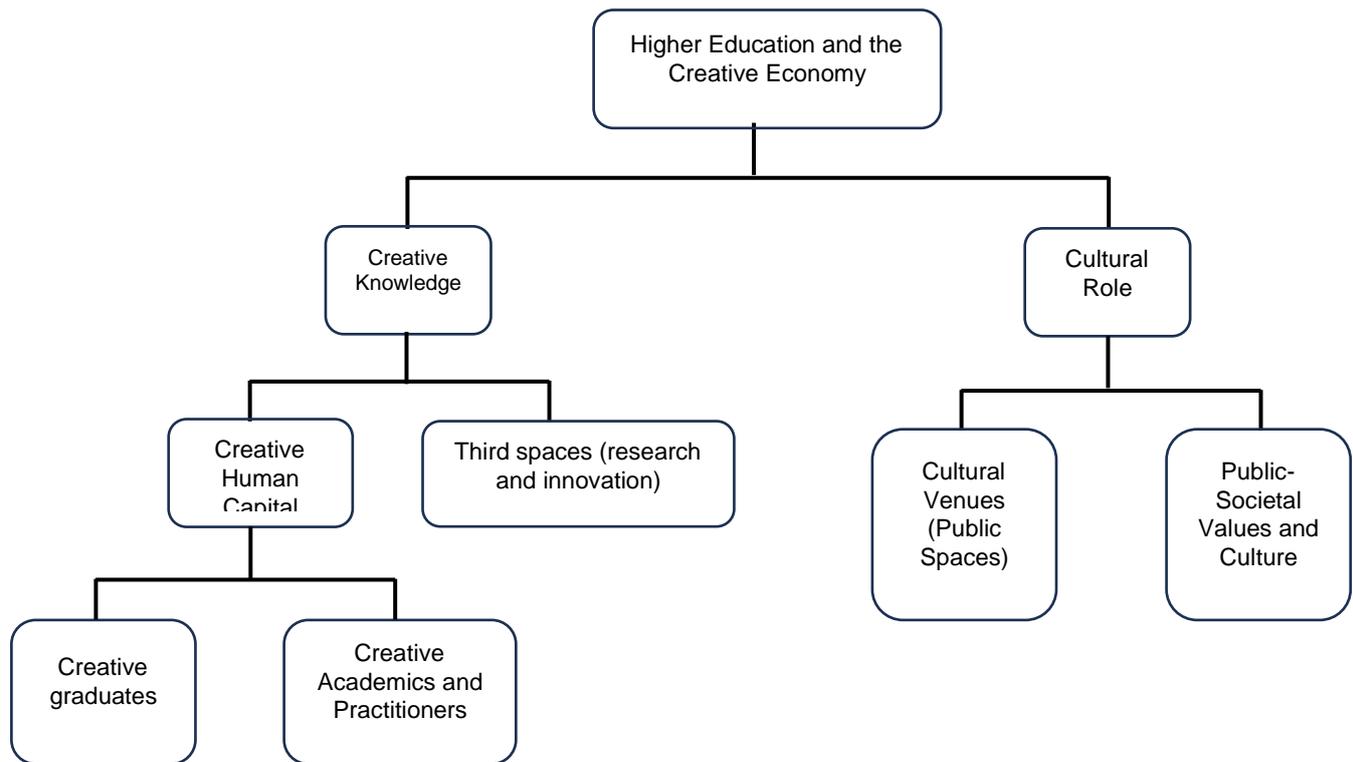
The effort to elevate the sustainability of the creative and cultural industry has long started in the *Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara* (DIKN) that was first initiated and introduced in 2009. According to DIKN, the creative industry has the capacity and ability to empower international relations be it a two-way or through many other methods of understanding from collaboration of human capital, infrastructure and from the product outcome itself. *Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara* (DIKN) policy is to empower the nation's creative industry as a whole that stems from creativity and innovation to contribute to the high-income economic sector from the production of quality products that would elevate the cultural heritage of Malaysia. DIKN mentioned in their first strategy which is to empower human capital in the creative industry from upskilling and reskilling activities, and room for creativity.

Let's look into the definition of graduates. Who are defined as graduates? According to the Ministry of Economy, the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM), the definition of graduates refers to those individuals who obtained the highest certification that they went for higher education in places such as universities, colleges, polytechnic, community colleges and many other recognised institutions, where the period of study is the minimum of two (2) years.

It is inevitable to understand the relation between higher education (HE) and the creative economy, and to do so there is a must to address the history of British art school as among the early pioneers of creative studies (Pettinger et. al., 2016). The post-war art schools provided the working class access to aesthetic and skill-based training that is operated in local communities and funded by the state.

The higher education sector in Malaysia has experienced advancement in order to produce the best quality in education (Norliza et.al., 2017). Malakolunthu and Rengasamy (2012) stated in their article that the Malaysian education system has been through a lot of enhancement that is an impact from the nation's socioeconomic advancement. The recent initiative by the government to elevate the higher education sector is by the announcement of the 2024 Budget by Malaysia's prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim. The prime minister announced that 16.3 billion MYR will be granted to the Minister of Higher Education to improve the infrastructure such as Wi-Fi and internet, facility maintenance, and development of artificial intelligence (AI) in public universities.

Figure 1: The figure below suggests the framework of relationship between higher education and the creative economy that was adapted from (Comunian and Gilmore, 2014).



Source: Framework of relationship of Higher Education (HE) and Creative Economy (HE) Comunian and Gilmore (2014).

In order to enable students to enter universities and institutes in Malaysia, the students must apply through UPUONLINE. UPUONLINE is a medium managed by the Ministry of Higher Education for student application to local institutions and universities. The data below indicates the list of public universities in Malaysia and their enrollment.

Table 2

Number of public universities and enrolment in Malaysia in the year 2019.

No.	Public Universities	Number of enrolment
1.	Universiti Malaya (UM)	32,915
2.	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	30,915
3.	Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM)	33,983
4.	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	28,696
5.	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM)	33,632
6.	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	31,804
7.	Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia (UIAM)	29,369
8.	Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS)	15,276
9.	Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS)	17,623
10.	Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI)	24,562
11.	Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)	181,501
12.	Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin (UniSZA)	12,353
13.	Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT)	10,100
14.	Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM)	12,472
15.	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia (UTHM)	18,031
16.	Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka (UTeM)	14,442
17.	Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP)	12,987
18.	Universiti Malaysia Perlis (UniMAP)	12,741
19.	Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)	9,727
20.	Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM)	4,983

Source: Planning and Policy Coordination, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)

The tabulated information of the list of public universities and the enrolment in 2019 above stated that *Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM)* enrolls the highest number of students of 181,501 students due to the many campuses they have scattered all over Malaysia, while *Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia (UPNM)* with 4,983 students holds the lowest number of enrolments of student due to the niche area of their university. However, there are many other universities in the private sectors that provide world-class education too in Malaysia. According to the 1996 Private Higher Education Institutions Act, international institutions were given permission to offer degree courses that were first collaborated with local Malaysian institutions (Pettinger et. al., 2016). Malaysia Education Info (2016) listed that there fifty-three (53) private universities and six foreign university branch institutions in Malaysia.

Table 3

Entrants, enrolment and graduates at Public University by fields of study and gender in 2019.

Fields of Study	Entrants			Enrolment			Graduate		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Education	3,416	8,677	12,093	11,042	28,433	39,475	2,807	5,790	7,877
Arts and Humanities	6,433	11,060	17,503	19,219	33,983	53,202	3,960	7,937	11,897
Social sciences, business and law	20,568	43,691	64,259	61,793	128,668	190,641	12,054	30,784	42,838
Science, mathematics and computer	11,862	17,318	29,180	34,072	53,688	87,760	6,141	12,805	18,946
Engineering, manufacturing and construction	21,280	16,482	37,762	70,887	56,548	127,435	16,558	15,158	31,716
Agriculture and veterinary	1,646	2,182	3,828	4,867	6,579	11,446	1,193	1,644	2,837
Health and welfare	2,547	6,558	9,105	9,747	25,290	35,037	1,806	5,142	6,948
Services	3,345	4,578	7,923	8,711	12,533	21,244	2,215	3,140	5,355
General programmes	380	503	883	615	770	1,385	1	3	4
Total	71,487	111,049	182,536	221,133	346,492	567,625	46015	82,403	128,418

Source: Planning and Policy Coordination, Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE)

Based on the tabulated data from Table 3 above, the number of graduates from public universities in 2019 of arts and humanities, social sciences, business and law study fields are 54,735 out of 128,418 people of graduates that would enter the workforce. This indicates, 42.6% of the total graduates in the year of 2019 comes from the arts and social sciences cluster which suggests the portion would be almost half of the number of the graduates.

Table 4

Mean Monthly Salaries and Wages of Employed Graduates by the Highest Certificate Obtained and Sex, Malaysia (2018-2020).

RM 0000'

Sex/ Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	4,897	5,020	4,489	4,582	4,760
Male	5,475	5,585	4,861	4,973	5,173
Female	4,369	4,498	4,135	4,215	4,374
Degree	5,940	6,016	5,471	5,559	5,722
Male	6,894	6,851	6,229	6,323	6,117
Female	5,154	5,298	4,835	4,922	5,277
Diploma	3,590	3,739	3,311	3,422	3,503
Male	3,897	4,090	3,436	3,571	3,709
Female	3,272	3,382	3,172	3,260	3,316

Source: Graduates Statistics 2022, Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM).

Malaysia's effort to pursue economic growth is by sustaining the education system (DoSM, 2022). According to the statistics by Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM), the number of graduates in 2021-2022 has escalated from 5.63 million graduates to 5.92 million. This

staggering increase despite the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic indicates Malaysia still has the capability to produce high, middle and low skill workers for the demand of the nation's human resource. In the year 2022, Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM) reported that 4.87 million graduates were employed.

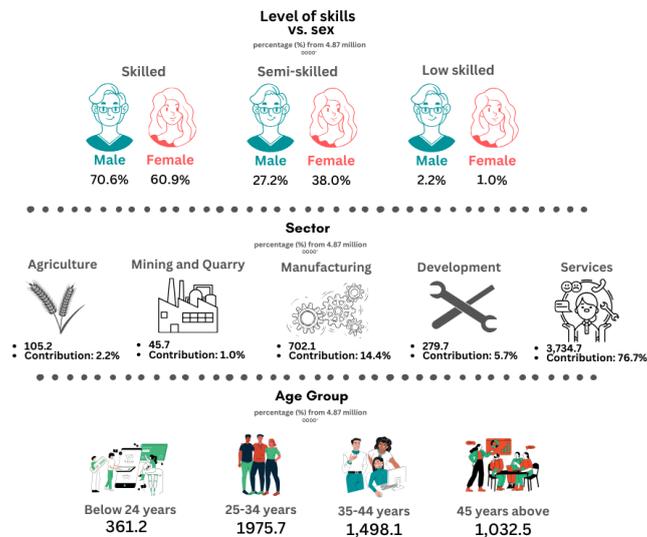


Figure 2: The figure below indicates three (3) types of segregation of data collected according to the level of skills vs. sex, sector of industry and group of age based on 2019 data. Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM)

According to the statistics above that was reported in the year 2019, 70.6% of the 4.87 million males employed are skilled workers, while the women employment in the semi-skilled category is 38% which outnumbered the male employees percentage. In the sector or type of industry category, the services sector has dominated the work force with a contribution of 76.7% or 3,734.7 million workers followed by the manufacturing sector which contributes about 14.4% or 702.1 million workers. And last but not least, the highest percentage of age that dominates the workforce in Malaysia are those in the range of 35-44 years old with 1,498.1 million workers. This group of age is also known as Gen Y or millennials.

Creative industry and its Career Sustainability

Balakrishnan et.al (2020); Carabal-Montagud (2018) stated that creative industries are a combination of knowledge and specialised skills that relates back to creativity. The creative industry can be divided into three (3) categories which are:

- I. Creative application
- II. Creative expression
- III. Creative technology

Creative industry may function and expand at a fast pace due to the advancement of new technology. Creative industries includes many other sectors such as economic, technological, cultural, technological and social mobility (Fahmi, et. al., 2017). Malaysian film industry is also considered as a small industry that only caters the population demand of 27.5 million people (Aziz et. al., 2014). Artists and those working in the creative industry are struggling in finding

a sustainable career pathway and on-going employment, but creative study graduates keep on being produced by universities and institutions. Australia has for several decades produced the highest graduates from higher education institutions in the creative sector in the past few decades since the year 1988 (Daniel and Daniel, 2015; Davis, 2013). Past literature also suggests that students that embark to creative industries sector in general have potential challenges in maintaining employment given the circumstances of oversupply of graduates and workforce capacity (Bridgstock and Carr, 2013; Collis, 2010)

Table 5

Employed graduates by status employment and sex in Malaysia (2018-2022)

RM 000'

Employment status	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Employer	194.4	184.1	193.9	199.9	228.5
Employee	3,286.2	3,557.4	3,797.3	4,145.9	4,368.2
Self-employed	363.3	326.6	307.7	194.9	223.5
Unpaid employee (family business)	57.4	52.8	54.1	49.6	47.2
Total	3,901.3	4,120.8	4,353.1	4,590.3	4,867.4

Source: Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM)

The table above stated the number of graduates that were employed from the year 2018-2022. According to the statistics by the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM) above, Malaysian graduates have the tendency to be employed and work with other parties and the number of graduates employed has increased over the years. In the year 2018, 3,286.2 million graduates were employed, and the number of graduates had increased to 4,368.2 million people in 2022. However, there is a significant drop of graduates who were self-employed from 2020 to 2021. The years of 2020-2021 were the years of COVID-19 pandemic that eventually shrinks the job opportunities in the market. Daniel and Daniel (2015); Ashton (2013, 2014); Haukka (2011) noted that the creative and performing industry is a highly competitive environment. The sector where the creative study students would graduate is called creative industries (Daniel and Daniel, 2015; Flew, 2014) which includes core creative arts such as visual arts, creative writing, and performing arts while other industries within the creative industry are film, television and radio. Another sector within the creative industry that has emerged according to technological advancement are design and software development. A practitioner, who wishes to sustain their employment and employability in creative industries, one must exhibit a collectively maintained network and employability over employment and must have entrepreneurial practices and behaviours (Daniel and Daniel, 2015; Zelenko and Bridgstock, 2014; Pollard and Wilson, 2013). Malaysia too is not an exception to join in the bandwagon of the concept of creative cities (Khuo, 2023). In Malaysia, creative cities are deemed as states that are advanced in their economic activities landscape such as Kuala Lumpur and Kuching. Among the initial ideas of creating creative cities concepts, proposed by the British government was because of the declining of industrial cities and unused factory sites (AuYong, 2018; Yoshimoto, 2003). However, to fill in the gaps and problems that occurred, the vacancies were filled with arts and creative activities. Malaysia was recognised by UNCTAD (2008) as one of many other Asian countries such as Nigeria, Vietnam and Indonesia to be promoting high value-added services in the digital economy through agencies such as Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC).

Generation Z in the Current Workforce

The job force environment today is more diverse compared to how it was before where it brings in at least five (5) generations (Accounting Principals, 2017). According to (Marginean, (2021); Villa and Dorsey (2017), the workforce will soon be flooded with those from the generation Y and Z and would hold the power of purchasing as consumers. It is prudent to divide the human resource (HR) into the generational segregation for better and effective administration to give insight to the specialists in HR to adapt to the new wave of employees and their personalities (Marginean, 2021; Twenge, 2010). Students from higher education in Malaysia are trained until they graduate and be “industry and tech savvy” as an added value on top of being able to obtain their academic certificate (Pettinger, Forker and Goffey, 2016). The creative industry is more commonly dominated and spearheaded by youth due to the nature of the industry that requires its players to be tech savvy. According to the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) report in 2012, the creative industry is deemed as a key sector for facilitating the operational activities of new embarkment of technology that sustains national development strategies. UNIDO focuses on the creative industry dynamics to generate new jobs and empower women entrepreneurs, youths and communities to respond to new opportunities that utilizes creativity, cultural heritage to the outcome of goods and services. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) report (2023) on employment, with so much geopolitical tension happening all around the world of the Ukraine and Gaza conflict, not to mention the uneven recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, this is the point that the condition of inflation was the worst recorded and low growth since the 1970s. A lot of countries have not been able to come back to how they operated before the pandemic hit.

Figure 3: The figure below illustrates the labour income referring to 2019-2022, an overview of deficits in decent work and social justice.



Source: ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates, November 2022; ILO social database; ILO.

According to the ww.4ailyexpress.com (2023), the increase of access to higher education is significantly connected due to the flourished economic state of a nation and benefits the workforce that results in mental development and developing critical thinking. However, this situation also brings in issues such as graduate unemployment. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM) report, most of the graduates come from lower income families or B40 and this adds to their struggle to find employment.

Methodology

This study uses a qualitative method where the researcher interviewed six (6) informants from 2 different generations which were from Gen Y and Z. The significance of interviewing both of these groups of age is due to the current workforce being dominated by both of these generations. The informants were interviewed via google meet in two (2) consecutive days in two (2) separate groups. Semi-structured questionnaires were handed to the informants beforehand for them to equip themselves with necessary information for the interview. The samples chosen were done by purposive sampling where the students chosen have background in creative studies and currently working in the creative industry. While the lecturers that were chosen and interviewed in this study have diverse backgrounds of technology and arts when they embarked to the education system as lecturers. The students in this study will be labelled as Y, and lecturers as L. The duration of the interview was an hour each. According to Yin et., al (2014), for case study research, it is best to acquire many sources of data and information instead of one.

Table 6

Informants profile matrix

Informant (Y/L)	Gender	Industry/ teaching Experience (years)	Position/ Profession
Y1	M	<10	Location Manager
Y2	M	<10	Music director
Y3	F	<10	Makeup artis/ Artist's Personal Assistant
L1	M	>10	Former Assistant director/ Lecturer
L2	M	>10	Lecturer
L3	M	>10	Lecturer

Results and Discussion

The data transcribed verbatim was then analysed using the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software or commonly referred to as CAQDAS of ATLAS.ti. The version used was the website version of ATLAS.ti., though the common versions are the desktop versions. However, among the perks of using the ATLAS.ti website version is that it enables the users to use the software on any devices. The website version of the software also works as a cloud storage tool to store all the relevant documents for data analysing. The central role of the software is to manage the collected data of a research project at one place (Soratto et. al., 2020). The study has managed to extract one-hundred (100) codes, four (4) code groups from the two (2) documents of interviews. The code groups were then themed into two (2) emergent themes that would be the findings of this study.

Table 7

One-hundred (100) codes extracted from the interview manuscripts.

Happiness	Freelancer	KWSP/EPF	Entrepreneurship	Entertainment industry
Endurance	Fast learner	Courteous	Networking	Acknowledge
Youth	Technology advancement	Deep interest	Creative studies	Creative industry
PROFIMA	Sustainability	High paying income	Opportunities	Collaboration
Foreign company	OTT	Viu	Netflix	TV Station
Production house	All-rounder	Music director	Location Manager	Make-up artist
Long hours	Change management	Over time allowances	Contract	Role of students
Lecturer's competencies	Audio-visual	Multi-skilled lecturers	Gen Z	Gen Y
Politeknik	UiTM	ASWARA	Production Assistants	Politeknik's Syllabus
Long-form	Short-form	ASTRO Shaw	Connection with seniors	Industry for the young
Quality	Intern	Professional crew	Self-marketing	Value in internship
JRKV lecturer	JRKV student	Teaching and Learning	Long hours in class	Teaching a subject in short period
New syllabus introduced	MCP	SCP	Script-writing	Industry Training (Sem 4)
Industry Training (Sem 6)	FYP (Final year project)	Industry readiness	Knowledgeable lecturers	Knowledgeable students
Technical (hands on learning)	Reference in media	Content Creators	Business management	CQI
Curriculum development	Intellectual Property literacy	Student's maturity	Industry must help academia	Academia must be updated with the industry latest trend
Industry training	Further studies	Career pathway	Diversity in learning	Job survival
Student's effort	Student exploration	Trends of student before and after PKP	Creativity	Variety in human resource

Modul	Industry-based training	Industry exposure	Student centred-learning	Information Technology
Multimedia	Cinematography	Photography	Industry experience	High income

The codes were then categorised in four (4) categories or code groups.

Table 8

Code Groups (CG) of the study.

Code Group (CG)	Explanation
CG 1	The creative studies in institutions must be able to be updated with the latest trends of the industry.
CG 2	Students that will be embarking the industry must not be too picky of jobs given and must be able to be multitasking.
CG 3	The industry must be supported by the senior generation and the government to adapt to the change of generational gap in the workforce.
CG 4	Job security with a healthy work environment and sustainability are all parties responsibilities.

The discussion of each of the code groups are as below

CG 1: The creative studies in institutions must be able to be updated with the latest trends of the industry.

A lot of discussion in the interview session derived on the readiness of the students to embark the creative industry after their graduation. Let’s look into the conversation between the excerpts.

“I think the institution must be able to teach us many other formats of script (as we are talking in this context) because of what I went through before in class and when I came into the industry. A lot was still not taught.”

Excerpt Y3

“I think it’s not that the institution does not want to teach us on the latest buzz in the industry. But since our institution that we went to is a government based institution, I believe a lot of limitations in equipment built up in our facilities may not be at par as there are in the industry. I had a friend at the office where he studied film studies in Thailand, where the equipment and syllabus is at par with Hollywood standards. But the tuition fees are super crazy expensive. What I can say is that the basic foundation given by my institution here in Poly XX is sufficient enough.”

Excerpt Y2

“The reason why we in our institution are always ready to collaborate with the community or government agencies to be part of their event management or MCP/ broadcasting activities is to provide the students who are interested to join in the projects of how the industry works. However, the jobs and environment that we have in assisting these government projects are

not at the commercial level of events but it is only teaching and learning standards, sufficient enough for the students and lecturers involved to get the experience of the real world."

Excerpt L2

Excerpt Y3 stated her concerns through her studying experience learning a few subjects that were insufficient and that doesn't comply with the industry practice. While excerpt Y2 expressed his opinion that it's not that the institution did not provide all that is needed to be in the industry. Since the institution he went to was a government funded school with low paying tuition fees, it is obvious that there will be a lot of limitations in exposure and learning environment.

Excerpt L2, as a lecturer stated that there were many initiatives taken by the institution to provide current industrial exposure to the students by participating events organised by third parties and being part of the committees. The experience of participating outside activities would provide positive impacts to the lecturers too, not only the students.

CG 2: Students that will be embarking the industry must not be too picky of jobs given and must be able to be multitasking.

"If you ask me, students should be able to start their journey in the industry by finding a good internship place. Because during the internship, it has the potential to provide an early insight on how the students want to place themselves later in their career."

Excerpt Y1

"During my time going through internship at this great production house 15 years ago, me and my friends had to fight for having a more significant job responsibility instead of going around running errands like photocopying papers or buying food for the crew members."

Excerpt L1

"I personally think that if there are any given talented students out there, but don't have the right internship place. They will not go anywhere. They may not have a sport in the industry because when we are interns, our mentors or employers during that time will be training us to be in the industry."

Excerpt Y2

Excerpt Y1 Stated that the interning students should be finding a good internship place because during the internship period is the most important milestone to begin a career in the creative industry. Excerpt Y2 also added to the statement of Y1 that if a talented person who did not manage to find a good intern place, that person may not be able to shine and find a place in the industry. Being an intern and associating a person's self to a bigger firm or entity is a great start for any rookie, said Y2.

Excerpt L1, who was a practitioner in the industry before entering the education institution as a lecturer, was once a director of photography and cinematographer. During his time in the industry, he has produced twenty-five (25) previous films before mentioning that there were times when bigger firms would be reluctant to give bigger and significant roles to the

internship students. But it is up to the intern students to pave their direction and aspiration of being in the industry.

CG 3: The industry must be supported by the senior generation and the government to adapt to the change of generational gap in the workforce.

"I can see that there is a slow movement in the current practice now by the Head of Departments (HOD) where they implement the 12 hours work, and over time. It's giving an impact to the industry when these HODs implement this because if lower ranks or new comers try to implement and improvise the flaws in the industry nothing much can be changed."

Excerpt Y1

"I see that the creative industry – the players are fighting. Fighting in the sense of generational gap where the younger generation's work values are always against the seniors that have been in the industry for the past 20 years."

Excerpt Y2

According to excerpt Y2, the industry was intertwined between many generational gaps that would be among the problems and challenges for the practitioners. There would be cross opinions between the senior generations vs. the younger ones that enter the workforce. Their values and beliefs would differ, but the differences shouldn't be a gap between the players. Excerpts Y1 stated some positive enhancement where the seniors which are Head of Departments (HOD) are starting to implement overtime payments to the crew, which is a good improvement on the creative industry flaws about payments.

CG 4: Job security with a healthy work environment and sustainability are all parties responsibilities.

"I would say to acquire opportunities in any field of work is always there. But the problem is to sustain... the survival of the industry. Our student... Here in our institution we have so much success to be talked about. But most of them would eventually fade through time. And yes, the industry is wide. The creative industry is wide. It's not just what you see on screen."

Excerpt L1

"I am very scared and worried that one day, when I will age in the future. There would be no phone calls or people would forget about me because there would be more new talents that might be as good or even better than me. Then how am I to sustain my career?"

Excerpt Y2

"Here in JRKV, we lecturers provide a lot of insights as much as it stays at the student's relevancy of understanding of their future prospects in the future after they graduate."

Excerpt L3

Excerpt L1 stated that there will be opportunities in the creative industry to develop a career. The challenge is to survive and sustain the career in the long term. Excerpt Y2 also stated that he is concerned of his future of what he might be if there will be newcomers into the industry,

since the industry is specially known to be popular among the younger generation. Previous literature review also indicates that competition in the creative industry is stiff.

Excerpt L3 stated the institution where he teaches video and film provides future prospect aspirations for the students so they can plan ahead of what they wish to be. Therefore the students should have early insights of the industry scenery and work towards any career or occupation they wish to be.

According to the World Employment and Social Outlook report in 2023, the advancement and speed of technological advancement in the digital economy is increasing, but the benefits behind it are not shared evenly with everyone involved. With the worsening global economy that is happening in the middle east, and Russia, and the improving state of the aftermath of COVID-19 is not helping improve the workforce. It is common to encounter the term freelancers among the creative industry practitioners and the term is coined by the academic researchers themselves (Kitching and Smallbone, 2012; Holgate and McKay, 2009). Failure to identify the freelance status disables any documentation and data collection statistics on their work. As a lot of the output of graduates will join the workforce and may or not be hired by companies and employers, the chances of them being freelancers are high too. According to Kitching and Smallbone (2012), freelancers may be defined as those genuinely owning businesses or working with other partners as co-owning owners or also taking charge of short engaging jobs as a source of income.

The themes that were discovered in this study are as stated below:

Table 9

Themes discovered in the study

Theme (T)	Explanation
T1	<p>Change Management.</p> <p>The creative industry must be sustained by all generations to reduce the imbalance of creative industry operation where the younger generation should be the ones spearheading the technological advancement and latest trends. The senior generation that are experienced in the creative industry should be the ones to contribute to enhancing the existing policy and way forward of the industry. There should be no competition between the generational gaps to sustain in the industry.</p>
T2	<p>Organisation Collaboration.</p> <p>The creative industry should be able to work together with the higher education (HE) be it from the private or government sectors to produce skilled and semi-skilled for the workforce that would have the potential to improve the quality of the graduate produce. This is because the government has injected a lot of budget and incentive for higher education to elevate the teaching and learning experience in campus, not to mention developing a lot of research and development (R&D) activities in many areas of studies that would benefit the creative industry.</p>

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study has provided insights into the ever changing landscape in the workforce especially in the creative industry. The Department of Statistics Malaysia (DoSM) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) recorded significant data of many generations of age and had been dominated by Gen Y and Gen Z. The current workforce is characterised with the rapidly changing with the entrance of the younger generation (Karaca-Atik, et. al., 2023; Barley, et. al., 2017). Today's workforce demand and environment is not as how it was in the past where workers are conventionally hired on a permanent basis. With the aftermath of COVID-19, these changes have led to an economic and labour force shock (ILO, 2020_a) and has impacted the norms of how working used to be.

This study's objective is to understand what is the career sustainability in the creative industry so that the younger generation have the ability to generate more income in the long run and improvise the existing flaws existing in the industry workforce. This study has extracted one hundred (100) codes, and four (4) code groups from the interview session conducted with six (6) informants of student alumni and lecturers. The code groups were later discovered into two (2) themes.

Theme 1 elaborated on the discovery of the higher education and creative industry must embrace all generation gaps that enter the workforce and adapt to change that is influenced by technological advancement. (Wallin et. al., 2018; Hytonen et. al., 2016) in a recent study stated that successful integration between the academics and the industry guidance requires expert profiles of individuals. This statement by fellow scholars supports the findings of this study in Theme 2.

Theme 2 explores the significance of the higher education (HE) and creative industry (CI) should be working together to be producing good quality graduates and not to mention in-depth research development of any particular area expertise. The industry should be able to be the advisor for higher education (HE) to provide "real-world" experience to the students and also to improvise the existing syllabus so that it would align with the current technology. This situation is due to the decrease of budget and incentive to provide training to newcomers of the workforce, the higher education needs to prepare the student graduates according to the industry demands (Karaca-Atik, et. al., 2023; OECD, 2017). The additional soft-skills that are caused by the labour market change is based on the 4C's of 21st century learning skills (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD), such as being able to innovate, produce and create, problem solving, being able to be creative and collaborate in a team. These acquired skills while being in higher education (HE) is essentially important and most required in social sciences students.

This study is hoped to provide initial insights on efforts to improvise the career sustainability in the creative industry for future graduates in Malaysia. Future recommendation and enhancement that could be done to this study is to further the data collection sampling into a bigger sample from other sectors in the creative studies, for this study uses purposive sampling that focuses on film and drama students from a TVET public institution under the Malaysia's Ministry Higher Education.

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