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Promoting Positive Values While Emphasising on Aesthetical Perspectives in University Students through Adaptation of Knowles Seven Step Process of Andragogical Approach

Juhanita Jiman
juhanitaj@gmail.com
University Malaysia of Computer Science and Engineering (UNIMY)

Abstract

This paper intends to illustrate how Knowles' seven step process of androgogical approach can help educators to better facilitate animation students with acquired technological knowledge and skills while exposing them to critical aesthetical elements and ethical principles. It is important for educators to understand that they are dealing with young adults who are highly affected by their environments in this borderless world. Therefore, educators are responsible for more than just academics; they also have social roles. To resolve these concerns, an effective androgogical approach can be advantageous for both educators and students. We used to assume that teaching pedagogy was necessary at all levels of education; however, since university students are no longer children, pedagogical methods are not entirely relevant to them. Pedagogy is a teaching method that focuses on children, while andragogy is a teaching approach that focuses on adults and helps them learn more effectively. When people grow older, they become more self-reliant and accountable for their actions. The pedagogical model, in several ways, fails to take care for such developmental shifts, resulting in individual stress, frustration, and resistance. Due to the rapid development in technology, animation students have become highly aggressive in their pursuit of technological expertise, leading them to ignore and overlook the importance of a story's core values. As educators, we must not only help them achieve their goals in terms of technical abilities, and professional experience, but also teach them what is right and wrong, and inspire them to instil moral principles in their work.

Keywords Aesthetical perspectives; Animation; Andragogy; Moral and cultural values

Introduction

Malcolm Shepherd Knowles (1913 – 1997) was an American educator, famous for introducing the term Andragogy as a term for adult education. According to Malcolm Knowles, andragogy is the art and science of adult learning. In Greek, androgogy means man-leading in comparison to pedagogy, which means child-leading. Adults' attitude of learning is perceived to be totally the opposite as compared to children's way of learning. Different approach needs to be implemented while working with this group of students, especially when dealing with artistic and content creation matters. Before 1950, all research was focused on children and there was not much evidence about adults' learning process. The term "andragogy", although known since 1833 when the German Alexander Kapp used it to address the theory of Plato, however, in modern education, it appears only after the early 1960s, when it was used to express the well-defined characteristics of adult learners that influence not only their learning interest, but also their learning ability, compared to those of younger children.

Teaching animation in Malaysian tertiary level institutions is very interesting and challenging. Since the development and the rise of multimedia industry in the mid-90s, many private and public higher learning institutions begin to offer and encourage more students to learn animation. Prior to this, animation is being taught and learned informally through exchanging experience and experimentation with various media. Eventually, animation course was first introduced formally in Malaysia through Multimedia University in the late 1990s with the aim to expedite the multimedia and entertainment industry, as well as providing talent pools for Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) in Cyberjaya and Malaysia at large. Fadli and Md Siddin (2010) mentioned that approximately 200 production companies registered under the Malaysian Technology and Multimedia in 2009 and they are supported by the government in an effort to increase local animation industry. Animation then was a new and 'BIG' thing to Malaysia. Soon after that, the number of higher learning institutions offering such courses in their programme of studies is increased, as this encourages more students to study this course and concurrently help to develop the animation industry in the country.

Research have shown that adults learn best when they have full control over their learning, but somehow this is not an easy task for the educators especially when they are dealing with creative subjects, especially animation. It is a broad area and involves with subjective contents, thus involving students to think beyond the norms and 'outside the box'. Without careful guidance, these students could go haywire and create something against local moral and cultural values. With appropriate andragogical approach, armed with moral and cultural support from the educators, it is forecasted that these young adults can perform better in their studies. Knowles (1984) called upon educators to employ a seven-steps process in order to implement and capitalise upon the assumptions of andragogy. According to Kearsley (2010) these steps include:

1. Creating a cooperative peer-to-peer learning climate.

2. Planning goals and objectives.
3. Mutually diagnosing learner needs and interests.
4. Helping learners to formulate learning objectives based on their needs and individual interests.
5. Designing sequential activities to achieve these objectives.
6. Carrying out the design to meet objectives with selected methods, materials, and resources.
7. Evaluating the quality of the learning experience for the learner that included reassessing needs for continued learning.

Personal Androgical Adaptation from Knowles Seven Step Process of Andragogical Approach

The Knowles' seven-steps process are adopted and discussed in this section, with aims to develop a healthy and rewarding animation teaching in the classroom:

1. Educate Students to be Aware of Their Roles in The Industry Development Through Peer-to-peer Learning

(Knowles' First Step from Seven Steps Process - Creating a cooperative peer-to-peer learning climate)

Most of the students taking animation courses in the higher learning institutions are young adults, whose age ranges from 19 to mid-20s, they are known to be very energetic, eager, very ambitious and full of crazy ideas. They love to experiment with new things. Technical elements of the work like special effects and hyperrealistic rendering are the sort of things that trigger their interest. If they are given the chance, they would try to stretch it to the limit. Pierson (2002) confirmed this by saying that the spectacular computer-generated imagery (CGI) being featured in Hollywood genre film also became an object of intense fascination, curiosity, and scrutiny in the popular and mass media. Even though this is a good thing, at this age, these young people are at the most critical point. At this time, they are very easy to be influenced by their peers and anything they see around them. This is the time when they want to do things that appear most interesting to them. Violence and sex become the things that they adore. Their role in society is often neglected. These students are either being influenced or influencing each other in their work approach. Educators can take this to their advantage. These students should be encouraged to do peer coaching and peer assessment. Many educators have used students-centric teaching to promote active learning in higher education. This andragogy is thought to increase student engagement by holding students accountable for their learning and increasing time on task in the classroom (Rathner & Schier, 2020)

Allen and Antonishak (2008) have mentioned that peer influences are often perceived as negative and the effects of peer pressure can vary from disturbing to dangerous, however, peer influence also have a much more positive aspect, which often is ignored. Therefore, educators can exploit students peer-to-peer influence through their learning involvement and make them realise that they are held responsible of

all their actions. Being an educator, it is very interesting to see how students develop their skills and talents to create something creative and entertaining. Thus, it is the role of the educators to guide these eager young brains to the right direction. Educators should take full advantage of peer learning; while peer learning is strong, learning process can be more lucrative. When peer tutoring or cooperative learning is carried out with due consideration as to what organisation best fits the objective, context and population and with a reasonably high level of implementing integrity, the results are usually very good. (Topping, 2001a; Topping & Ehly, 1998). They can do creative things together and encourage each other if they bear in mind that their animation should have certain values that are acceptable to the community around them. Social issues and moral values need to be addressed carefully and thoughtfully. If these appropriate values can be promoted through animation, this would bring tremendous impact to Malaysian local animation industry.

Through years of experience teaching animation in Malaysian university, it is found out that its animation industry will have a better future if educators carefully nurture these talents and at the same time encourage them to work collectively venturing into something new whilst preserving the delicate culture because preservation of culture and heritage is critical to the modern world's development. (Salau, Jimmy Anak, et al., 2018) It is seldom realised that these young students are actually open for criticism and they definitely need guidance. Even though students are usually defensive on their ideas and would do anything to put it across even if the idea is ethically and morally wrong, however, with the support from peer-to-peer learning, the educator should find it easier to engage with them and guide them to a 'better' and 'safer' alternative by using metaphors or other creative approach. Towards the end, the result could be positive and encouraging.

2. Encourage Students to Know their Purpose of Telling Stories

(Knowles' Second Step from Seven Steps Process -Planning goals and objectives)

Mostly, the very reason why people go to movies is because of 'the story'. All other things are secondary. According to Berliner (2013), the pleasure of a Hollywood narrative stems not only from good stories, but also from good storytelling. Through observation, it is seen that at this age, these young adults are naturally very inclined to 'technical wonders'. Special effects, particles, explosions and 360 degrees' camera treatment are usually what they love to experiment, but sadly, storytelling is treated as secondary element. They become very weak at telling stories. Without realising it, this has given a negative notion in local animation. These students should bear in mind that visual or special effects is something important, but they can still survive without it if their story has the 'FEEL' it needs. According to Abdullah and Ishak (2010), there is concern in Malaysia about a lack of creative talent. Content producers such as Animonsta mentioned that the talent pool is 'topheavy,' with most executives having strong technical production skills as opposed to talent required, such as those with art and storytelling and writing skills, directing, and so on (Karamjit, 2015).

As a form of expression (Wells 2002), animation needs ‘the essence’ that can tell stories and looks vibrant, as if, it exists in the real world. On the other hand, McKee and Fryer (2003) mentioned since the dawn of time, all great storytellers – from the ancient Greeks to Shakespeare and up to the present – have dealt with this fundamental conflict between subjective expectation and reality. In other word, storyteller always have problems in communicating their ideas effectively.

Ideas are crucial, and idea that can sell doesn’t have to be BIG! If we look at figure 1, these pictures are taken from Kring!, a dyslexia-themed animated film from Malaysia, has won an award at Norway's Best Children's Animated Film in 2020. The idea is simple, but the approach is very creative. A simple story becomes interesting when aesthetic values is stressed and paid more attention to; when paired with a sweet and lively story it works like magic! This is what we need to encourage the students. Give them local example and it would be better when they are given examples from their peers that they can relate to easily.



Figure 1 Images Taken from Kring! (Image Courtesy from BrainyBones)

3. Educator and Students Identifying the Needs of Good Acting Skills

(Knowles' Third Step from Seven Steps Process - Mutually diagnosing learner needs and interests.)

The art of acting, is very important in making the animation particularly the character-driven animation more alive and entertaining. The fundamental method of acting in animation is through experimentation of animating things or objects that they see around them and make different types of facial expressions by observing oneself at the mirror. These methods have been long practised by the professional animators in the industry. Lieff (2000) stated that after researching a few animation curriculums ranging from academia to commercial studios, as well as conducting interviews on the topic of acting and performance as it applies to the skilled animator, revealed unanimous consensus on the value of acting classes for good animation training.

However, asking young adults to act for their animation is a daunting task. They are no longer kids who would easily listen to what they are told. These students usually have their own way of doing things, despite of what being taught repeatedly. Through experience, these students have more self-awareness feelings; a lot stronger than little kids at primary schools, therefore, asking them to act out their story is a truly difficult task. If young kids would be thrilled if they are given such opportunity, these young adults usually the opposite. They are often shy to express themselves. As it was published in US-China Foreign Language, 2012 – “Teaching adult learners English through a variety of activities: Perception on games and rewards”, Chanseawrassamee (2012) explained:

“During English song contest, the objective of this activity is to promote class spirit and encourage students to become more outgoing. Yet, this activity must be done with caution especially with shy students by nature. Some students may feel too embarrassed to come to class, because this activity, on the one hand, really depends on a person’s characteristics and preference. Culture, personality, and peer pressure, on the other hand, really play a large part in the success of this activity”.

In order to make them interested in that acting session, the instructor or lecturer must play an active role to get involved in their activity. As a whole, conducting an acting class would definitely help students in creating a convincing character. The persuasive ‘interaction’ with the audience could be increased if this character could engage successfully with the audience’s real ‘life’ experience. As an animator, one has to observe the action of real-life actors whether in films or theatre in order to study natural action and motion. A good acting should appear natural and spontaneous. No one should realise that it is only an act. An ‘over-acting’ scenario should be avoided even though exaggeration is something quite important in animation. Charismatic and believable personalities are also very crucial, if not, they would fail to captivate the audience’s attention as Hooks describe:

“If an animated character makes you laugh or cry, feel fear, anger, empathy, or a million other emotions, it is largely due to the work of these often unsung artists, who invest a lot of themselves in the creation of these indelible moments”. (Hooks 2000)

4. Educators Assisting Students to Grasp the Fundamental and Basic Knowledge of Arts

(Knowles’ Fourth Step from Seven Steps Process - Helping learners to formulate learning objectives based on their needs and individual interests).

When taking 3D animation course in particular, some students are thinking that they are ‘safe’ from drawing and other basic arts knowledge. Some of these students do not like drawings at all because either they are not good at it or they do not have interest in it. However, without any doubts, the fundamental

understanding of drawings and the ability to draw, making models and possess a sense of crafting are other factors that help students to excel in their animation course. According to Hosea (2008), illustrations from traditional pencil drawing are also an integral part of the computer animation process. Any kind of form the ultimate output of an animation may take, traditional pencil techniques would have been used extensively during the pre-production phase, as well as in the training of the animators. The book *Drawing for Animation* (2008) illustrates that drawing is an important part in the processes of CGI animation including conceptualisation, design and planning of storyboarding and the design of characters, locations and props (Wells et al., 2008: 93–5)

These skills do not only help the creator to produce an outstanding piece but adds distinctive artistic values in their work. In addition to character animation, it is extremely important for the students to thoroughly understand and grasp the basic principles of animation as it helps in making the character appear believable and convincing. According to Lasseter (1987), these principles are developed through years of study and analysing of models in motion and examine the actions from the live action films, in the drawing classes for the animators during the early period of The Walt Disney Studio. Each of these principles are derives from the real-life action. As a matter of fact, it is crucial to accentuate these important ingredients in teaching and learning animation, particularly involving character animation, before it is too late so they can start creating a valuable piece of work and simultaneously produces a globally acclaimed animation.

5. Nurturing Passion and Patience in Student Animators to Create National Identities

(Knowles' Fifth Step from Seven Steps Process -Designing sequential activities to achieve these objectives.)

Young people are usually impatient and they want to do things fast. Educators should play their role in toning them down; to realise that their talent should be nurtured without rushing. If things are done in a rush, the result might not be as good as things that are done carefully and thoughtfully. Being passionate is not only about affection of seeing or making things, but it must allow the thinking process to explore beyond the logical thinking development. They should be creative enough to expand their imagination of the fantasy world. Inevitably, it opens up to many ideas and approaches, as well as enables them to be bold in experimenting new ideas and inventing their distinct styles.

Animation is a creative form of communication. While animators are trying hard to communicate through their work, their role in society needs to be carefully addressed. Stories can be only stories that people can easily forget, or stories can be 'THE' story that leave a deep impact in one's heart. Because of these young students are still in the process of learning, it is the duty of the educator to promote good ethics and moral values in their students' mind. When these students are aware of their ability to influence

people, hopefully they could use this opportunity to produce something that is beneficial to the public. Mohd Khalis, Mustaffa and Ali (2016) claimed that animation is a representation of people's lifestyles through a series of symbols and icons in the cultural industry, and it has the potential to be a medium contributing to the national identities development.

Animators tell a story in a series of IMAGES. If we would like the images to be recognised and remembered, we should know what elements can make it stronger. A creative application of elements and principles of design is the key to a successful piece. A sense of colour, forms, shapes, directions, rhythm, balance, harmony, contrast and all, when woven together, will create not only a beautiful work but, a meaningful piece of art that everybody can appreciate. While trying to get this creative work to achieve the highest aesthetic value, the content of the story should get the same treatment. Oh Yoojin (2019) explained in his article “Applying design principles to motion graphics”:

“Implementing these design principles will elevate the quality of your work. Applying even just a handful of these principles can make a big difference to the overall presentation of your animation and its appeal to your audience.”

Animators should choose a subject or a story that is closed enough to them in nature. What audience is looking for is nothing less than an interesting and meaningful story. If the story is not appealing enough to the creator themselves, do not expect other people could appreciate their work more than they could do. As a country with many unique cultures and rituals, Malaysian definitely have so much to offer. The representation of Malaysian characteristics in animation is also one of the goals of the National Creative Industry Policy (Dasar Industri Kreatif Negara), which was implemented in 2010. The policy's goal is to keep the creative industry vibrant and innovative so that it can contribute to the nation's economic development and the formation of national culture.

A famous Malaysian comic “Lat: The Kampung Boy” that was transformed into an animated TV series is one of the classic examples. The story revolves around a village boy from Perak Malaysia who's surrounded by his beloved family and friends had touched every single aspect of Malaysian multiracial lifestyle without being too harsh on every side. There is a very light touch of conflicts, comedy, moral issues and friendships, and all of them are woven carefully into a wonderful piece of story that everybody from all over the world can enjoy and understand.



Figure 2 Samples from Lat: The Kampung Boy (Courtesy from The Lat House)

Starting with only comic books, Lat has continued his legacy where Lat the Kampung Boy finally evolved to animated TV series. The author-illustrator of this title has long been a cause célèbre in Southeast Asia. As mentioned by Stevenson, Kampung Boy, is a memoir of the author's youth in a small Malaysian village, was first published way back in 1979, still popular these days and has been imported to a multitude of countries since then. Haliza (2000) explained:

“Mat represents the kid in us - irreverent, hyper and inventive, a natural leader whose curiosity opens up a world of adventure and mishaps! But he always learns his lesson in the end...”

Rohani Hashim (2005) pointed out that “Kampung Boy” is a record of Malay cultural development and changes faced by the rural community from the 1950s to the 1990s. She also mentioned that Lat's comic series has delicately captured a tale of *“fast disappearing Malay traditions and virtues”*, while urging audiences to consider the cultural shifts taking place around them. According to Rohani, the cartoonist's aim was to get the audience to think about the speed at which cultural modernisation are growing and to understand that accepting or rejecting new values is a common decision they should make.

Dellios (2000) mentioned that The Kampung Boy is an internationally known Malaysian icon because of its global appearance:

“The Kampung Boy is the product of the global 'kampung'. This television series is an artefact, an animated artefact on display around the world. It could be considered both a global artefact and an artefact of globalisation.”

This is why *Mamat* or *‘Mat’* from *Lat the Kampung Boy* has become an image that is easy to remember and being recognised by Malaysian people in all walks of life. Its simplistic and true nature has won itself a place in everybody's heart. The heart-warming appearance of a village boy can easily be recognised by people from different cultures. Malaysian animation critics acknowledged *Mamat* from *The Kampung Boy* as an aspiring element, and academics in cultural studies regarded the series as using modern technologies to

cherish Malaysian heritage. Hassan Muthalib said that the success in marketing the series overseas made *Kampung Boy* the benchmark for Malaysia's animation industry. (Hassan Muthalib, 2007).

6. Creating Local Animation and Avoiding Foreign Influences

(Knowles' Sixth Step from Seven Steps Process - Carrying out the design to meet objectives with selected methods, materials, and resources.)

Although animation has evolved in the western countries since the early days of the cinema as early as in 1900 (Haywards, 2002), only later, in around 1960s (Lent, 2001) animation started to be used commercially in Malaysia, in local cinema as well as on television. Then, in the late 70s, our local animation started to develop even further when Filem Negara produced the first animated short in 1978 called *Hikayat Sang Kancil*. Subsequently, this national body continues to produce many animated shorts mainly for local television in the early 80s. However, it was only in the mid-1990s during the emergence of the multimedia industry, many organisations became aware of the animation and its potentials, realising that the industry is gradually expanding as a serious business. Since then, private companies and government bodies started to encourage more animation production to be produced and have allocated some funding to support this industry. The MAC3 Co-Production Fund was established in 2009 to support the creation and development or co-development of Intellectual Properties in the creative cluster's Animation, Games, and Computer Graphics sectors. The grant is intended to assist innovative and forward-thinking local businesses in co-producing animation and game development projects with reputable partners that will contribute to the overall development.

Consequently, Malaysians were delighted to see many animated TV series produced locally since 1995 including *Usop Sontorian*, *Yokies* (1998), *Kluang Man* (1998), to name a few. Also, the first animated feature length *Silat Lagenda* was successfully released in 1998 after three years in the making, followed by *Cheritera*, the unreleased *Man Spider* (1999) and *Putih*. In addition, Malaysia can be proud of Mohamad Nor Khalid's (renowned as Lat) animated TV series, *The Kampung Boy*, which won the Best TV Series at the Annecy International Animation Festival in 1999.

Being well established, exposed and popular, western animation particularly the American and the Japanese *anime* style and techniques have significantly influencing the animation industry in Malaysia. Hassan Muthalib (2007) clarified that animation industry's most influential founders are Japan and Western countries. As a result, it is quite likely that they have inspired the character identities of local animation. *Kluang Man*, for example, was influenced by Batman and Robin, while anime style can be seen in *Anak-anak Sidek*, *Yokies*, and *Sang Wira* in the late 1990s.

Due to the excessive numbers of those animations being shown in the local TV stations, Malaysians are more fanatic about foreign productions rather than our 'homegrown' ones. Generally, most Malaysians see those foreign animated cartoons as 'very good' till they can't really see that some of our locally produced products are equally as good. Arguably, every animated cartoon including the locally made ones has its own strength and aesthetic values. There is always the good, the bad and the ugly in animation. The question is, to what extent do we know how to judge the animation fairly because we tend to see only one side of the story and often forgotten to search what lies underneath the surface.

Ruh (2004) has found a significant finding that a renown anime filmmaker Mamoru Oshii only had Japanese audience in mind when they first created their animation, and not the entire world. Oshii sole intention is for his films to be locally accepted before introducing it to the world. Japan has proven that this mechanism has worked wonderfully. This shows that for Malaysian animation to excel, it does not need to sacrifice its identity to cater for global audience but rather exploits local signs and symbols representing Malaysia and project it to the world through its own product of animation. (Omar & Md Sidin, 2017)

White and Winn (1995) claimed that many efforts were done by Disney to Westernise, and even Americanise, an artistic product of another culture. Most people dislike this kind of approach because it neglects the 'true' essence of the original culture and it attempts to commercialise a new 'artificial' value that probably easier to be accepted by larger audience. There is very little issue about local content as far as audience is concerned. The audience might not have this awareness yet, but for animators, it should be a different story. Ideally, animation product from any particular country should have its own identity. Now, animators should realise that the issue that we should be looking into is the development of the industry itself. Would there be a profound Malaysian animation industry in the future.

If we think that what is happening in the foreign animation industry is the way to succeed, we are totally mistaken. Taking foreign films as examples definitely has no harm but copying what has been done is rather discouraging. Very little attention was given to address this 'copycat' issue. May be this issue is outsmarted by the word 'experiments'. Some people think that it is alright to copy, so long that we are going to change to our own style soon. But, if there is very little effort done to establish this 'Malaysian' value, these 'experiments' will forever be experiments. This issue needs to be addressed seriously with our young students. We have to make them realise how important is to be creative in its true sense. We surely do not want our future animators to be carried away with mistaken identity.

7. Evaluating Own Creation for Continuous Development

(Knowles' Seventh Step from Seven Steps Process - Evaluating the quality of the learning experience for the learner that included reassessing needs for continued learning.)

Even though students are able to work independently to expend their creativity with minimum supervision and interference, however, student animators have to be intuitive as well. An animator and a cook probably share the same principles. They should like what they are making first before presenting it to others. Ingredients used in one's cooking without sense of confidence and balance probably will not taste as it was expected. According to Charney (2018), Ana Ro, the 2017 Best Female Chef in the World, said it best:

"We are artists. And we are artisans," she adds. "We do use our hands and our creativity. When a chef's hands can follow his mind, he is successful. We think about art and make crafts."

And the same goes to animator; a little bit of talents, skills and passion will make up a nice story. In addition, like cooking, a little touch and exploration on the recipe itself might give a wonderful surprise. While creating animation, without observation, unlimited imagination and sensitivity, those elements may produce only an empty shell. If the animation is going to work, it needs all the right components and with a little extra experiments, originality and hardship, definitely one's animation can work wonders.

A young and new to the field animators should think about how their story relates to the animation theories that they have learned. They should be aware that they have to lift those empty bodies with spirits of different individuals. However, the question here is how much can animators make people believe if what they are showing is not apparent enough to be seen? What if the most important gesture or facial expression to convey a tragic incident is overpowered by something not related? When animating characters, every movement and every action must exist for a reason. Animator should not exaggerate any motion for no reason even though exaggeration is one of the most important principles in Principles of Animation, as mentioned by Lasseter (1987) earlier that Principles of Animation will breathe life to the animated piece but one has to know how much it needs to deliver the right message.

In animation, while preparing for a narrative story, every step of the animation production has to be well-planned and organised. The animator should start asking themselves *'why?'*, from the early process of creating the story, designing the characters and the set, staging and animating the characters, creating the mood of lighting, composing the sound effects to the final step of editing, and so on, and on top of those questions, most importantly, they need to know all the answers. For example, why is the Sultan of Malacca wearing yellow? Does it have anything to do with the story? Does it support the whole? If the animators have all the valid answers than it is OK to dress him in yellow but if the answer is not concrete enough, may be, the Sultan can be dressed up in green or any other colours. The same thing goes to the movement/motion, sound, lighting, editing etc. Only with strong and valid reasons of using certain elements, one's piece of animation can be truly closed to the heart of the creator and hopefully to the viewer at large. Here, audience as viewers do not have to see every logic behind each scene, even if they have questions, the answer will become obvious somewhere along the storyline.

In experimental animation for example, there are always more rooms for creativity. In this case, it is always alright to break the rules without any apparent reason as long as the rules are perfectly understood. It is hardly a question why, because the animator has a total control of his/her own creation. Even though it is not clearly explained to the audience, the animator should have all the answers to the questions in the story. If the animator would like to put forward a new idea, even though it is alright to do weird things, message is still a message that needs to be delivered. So, it is the animator's task to invite the audience to think and to communicate with them through their own approach and style.

Critical Thinking: Why Should We Think Outside the Box?

Why do we need to have Critical Thinking when we only want to be an animator? What is the connection between critical thinking and animation industry? Therefore, Critical Thinking has to be defined clearly before we go very much further. Critical *thinking* is a technique for *evaluating* information and ideas, for deciding what to accept or to believe. Norris and Ennis (1989) stated that:

“Critical thinking is reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on deciding what to believe or do.”

To be a brilliant animator, one has to be a critical thinker because he or she needs to put across what is in their mind in a form that other people could see and relate to. Before putting their ideas into action, they have to think about the cause and also the consequences. Cholodenko (2006) clarified:

“Indeed, for me the animatic nature of film animation means that all films – film “as such” – calls for thinking in terms of the eruption of the quantum looniverse – and the Cryptic Complex – into the world where adults thought it did not apply, did not operate, was sheltered from.”

Student animators can be developed into future nation's best animators if they can grow as critical thinkers. Kurland (2000) mentioned that critical thinkers are sceptical by nature. They approach everything with the same scepticism and suspicion that they do to spoken explanations. This applies to animator; they have to be sceptical whether their ideas are valid and acceptable or not. Critical thinkers are active, not passive. They ask questions and analyse. They consciously apply tactics and strategies to uncover meaning or assure their understanding; this is also essential because once the animator understands his/her work very well, they could easily extend their ideas to their audience. If they themselves barely understand their subject it is far more difficult for them to put their message across and to be understood by their audience. Very often, students assume that they have to be a technical genius in order for them to create beautiful animation. Usually if they can't produce good works, they always go back to the reason that they are not familiar with the software or they are not good with the software. This kind of mentality has to be erased

from their mind. Software is only a tool; we simply can't afford to let this small problem becoming a drawback for their creativity.

Yes, it is true that students need to have a fair amount of knowledge on their chosen software to do their animation, but, at the same time, the students also have to realise that they need to be creative and very critical in solving certain problems. There is always more than one way to solve a problem. If plan A doesn't work, they have to do it in plan B, and if B still doesn't work, they have to sit down and think about a different alternative. Sometimes, student's own easier and creative approach works much better than what is taught in the book. Being technically competent is everybody's dream but not every student has this capability. Some students find it very hard to master certain advanced software, however, this should not be treated as something that hinder their creativities. If other students need only one day to learn and do certain things, maybe they need to spend a bit longer; and the key is they should not give up. Torrance (1977) mentioned about creative thinking:

"Understanding, measuring, and developing the creative thinking abilities are part of the educator's great dream of achieving a more humane kind of education in which all children will have a better chance to achieve their individual potentialities. It is of obvious importance to society that creative talent be identified, developed, and utilised."

Most people are too fanatic to Hollywood and think this is where everything seems to start and bloom, however, it is always great to produce something of our own. Students could do magical effects but not with the sole intention to copy the in-thing. Even if every new movie produced there, pushes the limit of technology like never been done before, special effects alone never will bring up the quality of the story. If the story is so lame and weak, special effects would only be a piece of technical wonders to ponder but there will be no story to talk about and appreciate.

Movie producers have spent millions of dollars for visual effects. Special effects have been known since 1902, when back then only simple trick of photography was used. Powerful PCs these days are able to replace gigantic workstations especially those Silicon Graphics Computer Systems with half the size and cost. The success of bringing dinosaurs to 'life' with computer generated images (CGI) in the film 'Jurassic Park' produced by Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) was a major breakthrough. However, in the film 'Final Fantasy' (2001) directed by Hironobu Sakaguchi, where all the characters are lifelike digital human to replace human actors, became a box-office bomb or box-office flop (a movie that is seen highly unprofitable, unsuccessful or fail during its theatrical run) despite of its reputation being the first 100% used of digital characters- simply because of the story. From Rotten Tomatoes, website's critical consensus reads:

"The movie raises the bar for computer animated movies, but the story is dull and emotionally removed."

Conclusion

Student animators these days would create expert animators in the future. There is a big burden on every educators' shoulder (in this field) to make sure that these young people are carefully 'nurtured' with good moral and ethics as well as aesthetical values in order for them to promote 'morally and aesthetically' correct products. With appropriate andragogical approach applied in animation education, these future animators are anticipated to be more creative, productive and ready to leap for a more challenging industry. It will be hard for Malaysian animation to achieve a global recognition in this trade if the working forces are not willing to allow criticism. Audience criticism should not be treated as something damaging or discouraging, but it should be positively accepted, digested and if needed, changed or better developed for acceptance by local and international audience. Understanding and implementing all of the following elements are crucial to develop a better future in Malaysian animation industry:

- good story structure and storytelling; we have to teach and learn to question 'Why?' in order to become critical and be more sensitive towards ethics, moral and cultural values
- understanding the basic animation principles and exploring the boundaries
- sufficient technical understanding, critical thinking and creative problem solving approach

As it was elaborated earlier, the future of teaching and learning animation in the Malaysian academics should be more open and adventurous. Educators should allow more experiments and innovations while students should be ready to embark into a more exciting, imaginative yet exclusive to our culture. On top of that, more ethical and moral values should be instilled and stressed as this medium has high potential to influence people. Whether it is positive or negative, it is in our hand to decide.

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